

MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE.

JUNE, 1902.

KING ALFRED TO KING EDWARD.

JUNE 26TH, 1902.

They watch from their graves.—Browning.

I, ALFRED ATHULFING, king, o'er this people kept watch and ward
In the days when the wild sea-wolves swooped thither on foray and
raid,
And my left hand wielded the sceptre, but my right hand gripped the
sword,
And I played them a match at spear-play till they wearied of shield and
blade.
And still, as I watch from the tomb, in my people's joys I have part,
And in its sorrow I sorrow ; and my pulseless brain and heart
Throb anew with gladness and hope as, this day of thy hallowing,
From my unknown grave I greet thee : *Wes Hál!* God save the
King !

From my unknown grave I greet thee ; and the mighty dead who
swayed
This sceptre of old, and they who the deep foundations laid
Of Empire, who thought and wrought for its weal and shaped its doom,
With me they greet thee, oh King, for with me they watch from the
tomb.
Edward, my warrior child, and he who wagered and won,
In war-play with Northman and Scot, the land of his sires, Athelstan ;
And Saxon Harold, and Norman William, and Edward, mighty of limb,
And he who at Poitiers hewed his homeward path through heaps of the
slain ;
And Harry the Fifth, and Harry the Eighth, and the lion-child born
to him,
The Queen whose captains harried the hosts and shattered the ships
of Spain ;
And they who have served the State in camp or at council-board,
And they who have toiled with the pen, and they who have toiled with
the sword,
And broadened the bounds of Empire by arms, or by arts adorned,

And the poets who hymned its praises, hail thee. And one, still mourned
On earth, who came hither erewhile 'mid the booming of guns and the
beat

Of drums and the wailing that comes from a nation when city and
street

Are draped in purple and decked with crape, and flags droop as they
wave;

Oh Edward, thy mother salutes thee from the silent land of the grave.

Then 'mid all the splendour and circumstance of thy sacring day,
'mid all

The blare of music and shouting of crowds and thunder of festival,
Remember that guests unbidden throng chapel and chancel and nave
And the aisles of the Abbey, the unseen hosts who silently watch from
the grave;

Who witness the oaths thou swearest to-day, who shall scrutinise all
thy ways

With unsleeping eyes through the coming years, who shall mark how
men blame thee or praise.

But because we know that thy heart is set on the welfare of those
Whom thou rulest, because thou art minded to further their weal and
repose,

To hedge in their goings from evil, to waylay the malice of foes;
Because from the past we may augur the future, and e'er thou hast
been

In all things the strenuous son of thy mother, and thou and thy Queen,
The fair-faced child from the Northland whence my foes once swooped
o'er the sea,

Have waxed and increased in the love of this widening Empire,
that we

Tended of old from its youth and fostered in infancy,

We acclaim you with joy from the grave, we have thronged to your
hallowing.

God bless thee, oh Queen, for ever! For ever God bless thee, oh
King!

E. H.

THE CARDINAL'S PAWN.

CHAPTER V.

A COCK, somewhere without the Oricellari, crowed discordantly, as though wakening the world to the burden of sin forgotten during sleep.

The sound fell sharply on the ear of the girl, chafing the limbs stiffened during her vigil. A faint hope, blowing out of the new day, stirred in her, and she breathed the freshness of the morning air with awakening vigour. It was early enough still to escape, to withdraw, if it might be, out of the reach of the powerful employer, who, Fiamma shrewdly suspected, would be apt to spell failure with the letters of crime.

Slipping from the ilex-tree she plunged into the opposite side of the grove, only to stop short with the suddenness of a blow as the sight of a rust-red stain upon the grass woke the last night in her quivering brain. She stared dully at the damp patch of turf that told of a ghastly burden lying there the night through, but now vanished. Somewhere in Florence living eyes were even now sating themselves on a dead face, proving the assassins' work before their night's wages should be paid down to them. A spasm, that this girl with her nerves of steel scarcely knew to be a sob, contracted her throat; and as there flashed before her the face of the fair woman, who had lured a husband to his death, that his corpse might be a stepping-stone to her ambition, Fiamma clenched the hands hanging at her sides. "By the Five Wounds," she murmured, with stiffening lips,

"the cost of this night's revel shall be paid to the last *grosso*!"

She plunged on through the undergrowth, rapidly formulating her changed plans. Once, when her fingers went to the place at her belt where a dagger should have hung, her level brows drew together as she remembered that she was still in the diabolic livery with which Cassandra's agent had invested her yesterday. At every step her face hardened, the lips setting in the smile with which a man springs to a forlorn hope. The moss-covered stones of a wall, rising through the trees in front of her, gave footing enough for her active limbs to scramble to the top; and as she dropped safely on the other side, her quick eyes perceived the white *campanile* to the left of the vineyards in which she found herself. Furnished with this landmark she stepped lightly through the low-growing vines on which tiny earthen masks here and there, twisting in the morning wind, told of precaution, ripe before the fruit, against thieving birds.

The hood of her mantle shielding her eyes from the level sunbeams, Fiamma became conscious of a presence in her path, her downcast glance telling her of a Franciscan's brown frock above sandalled feet, while low notes from the bell of a white-washed chapel, close to the road along which the friar had come, sounded in shallow reiteration.

As the sandalled feet shuffled past the girl, the gloom in her eyes kindled with the illumination of a sudden thought. She turned, confronting the friar with an imperious good-

humoured gesture. "Say, Friar, would'st do me a good turn, and thy convent another?"

"Assuredly, my son," said the friar, surveying her curiously.

Fiamma leaned back against a stake garlanded with the fresh young vine-leaves. "My errand needs the speed of the four chariots of St. John's Eve, and yet, as thou seest, I am tired." She fixed her eyes meaningly on her hearer. "A cardinal is not one to brook a limping messenger."

The Franciscan's face changed into interest. "What cardinal do you speak of, young sir?"

"One who may yet cast aside the red hat for the three crowns. Is it with your will to do him service?"

"In these evil days the followers of the blessed Francis need to stand firmly in high places, that the Dominican dogs may not hound them from Florence."

"Carry a message then for me to the Riccardi Palace."

"To Cardinal Medici?"

"The same. Ask for Messer Cosmo, his page, and bid him tell His Eminence that the falcon which he loosed a month ago behind the church of St. Apollonia, stooped and missed yesterday, but she will yet bring down her game. Say, Frate, I pray,—" she paused—"that the Cavaliere Padino waits His Eminence's messenger in yonder chapel."

The friar nodded. "Let me help you there, *messer*; you seem in truth as weak as water. I think it a thousand years till I serve you and His Eminence; there is like to be a small sheaf to bind from the grass that grows under Brother Battista's feet, I warrant you."

A quick relief heaved Fiamma's breast, as, leaning a hand on either door of the little chapel, she watched the figure hurrying along the narrowing perspective of the high road. "It

would have been pulling Death by the moustachios to venture this tell-tale face into Florence to-day, when Bonaventuri is a name in every gaper's mouth," she reflected. "The saints grant that yon brother will deliver my message, and the Cardinal unravel it rightly. 'Twill be some hours of daylight saved."

The weariness, which had served her truly enough for her pretext, crept overmasteringly upon her in the lull into which the excitement of twenty hours had fallen, as boiling waters cast themselves into the quiet pool beneath, before streaming into the current beyond. Curling herself upon the sun-warmed bricks beside the altar, she was asleep before Brother Battista's brown outlines had melted into the blue distance.

The metallic creak of a cicala broke her slumber at last. Leaning on a drowsy elbow she looked about her, wondering at the scent of warm earth and growing plants that floated to her, in odorous contrast to the domestic incense pervading her late quarters in the Way of the Beautiful Ladies. The next instant, as a dart of recollection pricked her, she stumbled to her feet, disregarding the stiffness of her muscles; but as she reached the doorway a keen sense of disappointment overcame her physical weariness at the sight of the steadily approaching form of her own messenger. What did it mean? That the simple cypher of her message could have been misunderstood by the Cardinal was impossible; the only alternatives were that her pledge of future service had been tossed aside like a broken tool, or that Brother Battista had fallen in with some pragmatical underling, and been forthwith dismissed. Passively she watched the brown form nearing her, till the face under the penthouse of cowl became visible. With a quick straightening

of her drooping shoulders, the girl stood erect in the presence of Cardinal Ferdinando himself.

A slight greyness overspread the Cardinal's features, due perhaps to the dust of the road, lying like meal in the ruts furrowed by the wheels of the wine-carts. The woman's eyes fell baffled before the absolute impassiveness of countenance with which the man stepped past her into the little chapel, raising his fingers in a slight gesture between salutation and benediction. He seated himself on the brick ledge leading into the apse, Fiamma standing before him like a culprit before a judge.

"You have acted well, daughter." The words, falling in a monotonous tone through the silence, startled her into fixing an eager glance on his face. "Well, for all Florence is fermenting over the news of the death of the Capelli's husband; and the widow, sable as cloth of Cyprus can make her, only carries his obsequies before she sets out for Venice, to entreat the protection of the Republic for a mourning daughter of St. Mark."

Fiamma started, a pale anger in her face. "Your Eminence, I swear—"

The Cardinal lifted his hand commandingly. "But Madonna Cassandra vows that he who met his death last night may be whom he and the devil please, but no husband of Bianca. She speaks of a coat of mail, proof against any dagger, which she sent to Pietro by a sure hand no later than yesterday. This she did, knowing that the Capelli had bidden him to a feast among the woods of the Oricellari, hinting that she repented of their late coldness. And Piccolo, Cassandra's dwarf, tells a tale of how, concealed in the banquet-room, he contrived to send a whisper of warning into Pietro's ears."

Fiamma's hands clenched themselves in a gesture less of despair

than of impotent rage against the evil fate that surely seemed to dog her family. That she herself should have been the one to snatch the last chance of safety out of her brother's hand struck her as an injustice of circumstance; the vengeance on which she was already pledged to spend herself, appeared as an expiation.

"You see that the cards are not all upon the table yet," pursued the man. "Hearken: there are yet some weeks before the Capelli's influence can work on the Grand Duke to submit to a formal marriage. Is it in you to dog her to Venice and, trading on the likeness which has already juggled one so keen-eyed as Cassandra, persuade the fair widow that she has yet a living husband, and conjure her to betake herself for a space to Rome?" For once His Eminence's voice had lost something of its smoothness, and the greyness on the clear-cut face had chilled into absolute pallor. "Should this plan succeed,—and surely the chance that threw you with that face in my way is an omen of success—the shame that threatens the Medici's name may be averted, without scandal, if it may be. But if not—"

The rattle of the cicala without thrilled wearisomely as the man's voice fell lower. The fresco-daubed walls, the altar with its gilded semicircle above, representing a Madonna and Child with necks apparently grown awry under the burden of their aureoles, had shifted from the girl's eyes. She beheld in memory's crystal a lovely green-robed woman kindling a man's hatred into murder with the careless smile with which one might light a taper to singe a troublesome moth. The young softly-tinted face of Fiamma had grown rigid before her bent head was raised; but then a sentence struck the silence like a clash of cymbals. "When shall I set forth?"

Cardinal Ferdinando rose as though stirred by the question. "The path I have shown you is slippery walking, daughter. Are you strong to face the danger, the Ten who have ears for the silence and eyes for the darkness, and by whom Pietro Bonaventuri is doomed to the scaffold behind the Piazzetta pillars?"

A slight contemptuous smile came on the girl's lips. "It is scarce good coursing, Eminence, to leash the hound back after laying it on a trail. When is it your pleasure that I set forth?"

"At nightfall." The Cardinal's glance appraised the resolution in her face. "You will do well at least to reckon with the twin peril of letting Madonna Cassandra,—already hot-foot to Venice too, her master the best knows for what purpose—come to close quarters with thee, a love-sick woman's eyes being hard to pull the wool over. It may seem to your doughtiness no great task to avoid the vigilance of one paralysed from the waist downwards, but Piccolo the dwarf is feet and hands to his mistress, as well as ears and eyes. Being less than the least of men he can hide where they cannot, and no wall is too steep for him to scale, no cranny too small for him to lurk in. You will do well, I say again, to tread warily, my damsel-errant, remembering on the one hand that too open flouting might cause such a woman as Cassandra to denounce you to the Ten, and on the other, that a quarter of an hour in her presence may spell defeat for us."

Fiamma's fingers moved again involuntarily to the place at her belt where a dagger should have hung. As though the touch brought recollection, she glanced at the strange dress visible within the displaced folds of her mantle. "I can scarce travel in this garb, Eminence."

Cardinal Ferdinando nodded. The

usually scornfully tolerant smile was on his lips again, as his hand slid into the bosom of the brown frock, producing a tolerably heavy purse and a wooden crucifix. "All things needful for your purpose may be obtained on the road. Here is gold enough for your wants during the space of time which we may reckon on; a coy mistress makes an ardent lover, and the Grand Duke's wooing is apt to be short." He surrendered the purse to the outstretched fingers and raised the crucifix with a peculiar smile. "Should a time come when the arm of flesh fails you, daughter, and your wit is in the straits, your best resource will lie in this. Hang it about your neck, and part not from it night or day."

His satirical smile was reflected in the girl's eyes, as she took the crucifix from him, a rudely-fashioned Christ fastened on the wood with strong nails. Without another word the Cardinal passed from her, setting his face towards the towers glowing like red lilies against the sky. He had hardly, however, taken two steps before he turned. "What name was that, daughter, which your messenger named to Cosmo a while ago?"

The careless contemptuous smile curved the red lips again. "Cavaliere Padino, Eminence, is a fit name for the poor pawn who risks nothing but itself in a bold move of the game."

"It is well," responded the Cardinal curtly, moving away again with the heavy plodding gait of the mendicant friar of his disguise. The little trail of dust raised by the heavy serge swirled behind him with the sinuous effect of some serpent unwinding upon his track. Fiamma turned her eyes impatiently from the retreating figure to the heavy dun clouds hanging low on the blue horizon.

"Three or four hours to wait for the darkness," she reflected, "unless

I journey with the storm. 'Twill be no such ill fellow, at the least keeping prying eyes from me." A silence, dulling the small life that chirped and basked among the sun-warmed clods of the vineyards, weighted the air, the sunshine fading beneath it. A sudden flicker of lightning ran through the twilight of the chapel. "Best go ere my track grows too plain in the mud," Fiamma concluded, stepping through the downpouring rain with bent head and hurrying footsteps. The way she struck into lay towards the mountains, looming behind the sweeping curtain of storm. Mile after mile was conquered by the light feet. With the steepening road the girl slackened pace now and again, peering through the growth of beech and chestnut on each hand and trying to clear her ears from the rustle and patter of the rain.

"The bleat of a goat would point to where I could ask the road of some fellow-creature," she said half-aloud. "Even if I do not stray from the track into the lap of one of those waterfalls I hear foaming about me, the loss of every hour keeps me from my purpose."

She pressed onwards again, but slower, a sense of depression and sickness reminding her that for hours she had not tasted food. The torrents of rain were lessening, but the darkness had grown almost tangible. A sweet odour on the rain-freshened air made her stoop, mechanically gathering a handful of yellow lilies blossoming on the short grass.

"These grow on pasture-lands," she said, as she felt the serrated chalices with her fingers; "and pastures argue a flock, and a flock a shepherd, so I need but to cry courage to myself."

But in spite of her brave words, her heart sank persistently, as the ground grew increasingly broken,

once or twice wiry clumps of heath causing her an unexpected fall. A wind, too, had awakened in fitful moanings, driving the clouds across the sky in a bewildering flight, and blotting out the stars by which she might have steered as a retreating army might trample out the fires of its camp. The girl stood still at last, driven to own defeat.

"I will wander no more in this gloom," she muttered resolutely. "Before this I have taken a night's lodging under an arbutus-bush,—so, to find one now."

She raised the eyes which for the last half-hour had been anxiously bent on her steps, to strain them once more through the darkness. For an instant she stood aghast. About a half a mile or so away, its red glow consuming the night, a pyramid of flame rose through the dark, now lessening and now waxing as Fiamma looked. With the leap of a hunted thing she turned to run wildly into the denser shadows. Setting her breast against the sheer hill she panted on, till even the stimulus of fear failed to nerve her limbs, and she reeled and fell on the sodden grass.

"There was truth, then," she reflected, "in those convent-tales of an inlet to Purgatory somewhere in these mountains, by which one in Florence once descended, and wrote strange rhymes thereafter on the journey that had left his visage all besmirched and swarthy with the fumes of the fire; yet why should the fires blaze for me, who seek but justice for a brother's death, and not for her who takes her turn even out of hell itself to compass a husband's murder?"

Lulled by a certain sense of physical shelter in the nook where she had fallen, she yielded to the sleep stealing over her; and there she lay

motionless hour after hour till the morning sun darted insistently at her veiled eyes.

CHAPTER VI.

THE scene on which the fringed eyelids opened was sufficiently strange; a green hollow way between grassy mounds furrowed into lines of chambered recesses, the tombs, it would appear, of some bygone race. Yet Fiamma, lying at the entrance of such a mysterious graveyard, took no note of her surroundings, her eyes in the first instant falling on the figure of a sleeping man not ten paces from her shoulder.

The girl drew herself upright, gazing at the fellow-traveller whose hostelry she had unconsciously invaded. His suit of dark-blue cloth revealed nothing to her, but the long limbs tossed in the negligence of sleep, the white skin, and curling fair hair of the head pillowed on the man's arm, betrayed a foreigner, even before a pair of sea-blue eyes slowly opened, returning Fiamma's intent stare.

"Welcome to the hospitality of these mountains," the stranger remarked, without stirring from his careless attitude. "Open house kept here, but had I been awake on your arrival, I could have pointed you to quarters somewhat more to leeward of the storm."

The carefully lipped Italian went by Fiamma unheeded, conscious of the fierce hunger which would no longer be denied. "Food, bread!" she whispered hoarsely.

The young man vented a long whistle, instantaneously answered by a round-jerked serving-man.

"Here, Giles, the saddle-bags with what means we have of spreading a table in the wilderness," his master ordained briefly in English. "I fear, *signor*," relapsing into his laborious

Italian, "the basket of fragments is like to begin as well as to end the feast, of which nothing is of the best save the welcome."

The blue eyes scanned the girl curiously, as Giles marshalled the resources of the saddle-bags. The Englishman's glance passed carelessly over the unusual garb, only half-hidden by the mantle, but lingered the more insistently on the face above. With her first mouthfuls Fiamma felt herself answering again to her will; a colour brought by the fresh wind glowed in her rounded cheeks, her eyes under their long fringes glistened like wave-washed agates. Impatient of the quiet scrutiny she glanced up at last. "You are for Florence, *messer*?"

The sudden question failed to bring an immediate answer. Fiamma felt disconcerted by the pause. "I am just from thence," she went on, lifting her head boldly to meet the stranger's stare. For a moment she fancied a flicker of interest glanced in the eyes watching her, but with the next they were as keenly hard as before.

"Then I wager your news-wallet is betterworth emptying than my saddle-bags," was the rejoinder. "What of the Capelli? Has Duke Francesco found a Grand Duchess who will look on the fair Venetian with her husband's eyes?"

A warmth sprang up under Fiamma's olive skin, startling her into unpremeditated speech. "The Capelli is the fairest widow in Florence to-day," she said. "When I passed the gates yesterday, the murder of Bonaventuri was in all men's mouths."

The traitorous colour glowed under his gaze, but for a moment both were silent. The stranger spoke first, folding his arms lazily under his head. "Bonaventuri dead!" he said. "That's

news indeed; and yourself, sir, if a fellow-traveller may ask, where are you making towards?"

A quick fear pressed Fiamma to evasion. "To Bologna," she answered hastily, feeling, the moment the word had passed her lips, that somehow a card for which the other had been waiting had been played.

"Why, then, we may travel in company," he responded. "As a beginning of good fellowship let us exchange names. Mine is Mark Talbot of Lincolnshire, England, heir to a younger son's portion of a pedigree longer than his purse, and what wit his elders may have left for him."

"The Cavaliere Padino, at your service," Fiamma returned, resenting vaguely the good-humoured half-mocking bow with which the name was received. Talbot rose, displaying his tall well-knit figure in a stretch. The girl imitated his movements slowly, feeling herself caught in the spring of a hasty word, but rapidly deciding that safety, no less than appearances, demanded that she should resign herself to the loss of a day which the turning aside to Bologna would involve.

"We had best be jogging," Talbot remarked, glancing at the sun. "Do me the favour, sir, to mount my horse for the first stage at least. One can scarce be benighted and half-starved, without paying the penalty in stiffened limbs. Giles can walk; 'twill do him good, for he has well-nigh turned goose or angel in the Venetian waterways, so little call was there for legs among them."

"You are from Venice, then," Fiamma ventured, clambering, awkwardly she knew, on to the horse the servant held ready for her. Her eyes lingered involuntarily on the Englishman's athletic six feet of manhood, as he vaulted into his saddle.

"Why, yes, but Venice is not

healthy for all men." This time the blue eyes swept her face with unmistakable significance. "You know it, *messer?*"

"I? no." Fiamma parried the thrust with a counter-question. "You were forced to leave it?"

Talbot shrugged his shoulders laughingly. "The streets are too damp; that's all my quarrel with Venice."

Fiamma fell silent, revolving the situation. The track wound through the mountains, now plunging into lush ravines, where fern-grown rocks, laced with waterfalls, narrowed above their heads into vaulted arches sealed with a streak of blue, and again widening into meadow-patches shady with chestnuts. Various short cuts, seemingly well-known to Talbot, though involving scrambling where the horses must climb like mules, considerably discounted the distance spanned by the trodden path. Already peasant-girls, scarcely visible under their green faggots of fodder, and flocks of goats herded by old women with flax-filled distaffs, told of approach to Bologna in its plain fringing the skirts of the mountains. Yet even as the girl meditated on the best way to elude an unwelcome companionship and continue her journey without leaving any tell-tale traces, she was fretted at finding her thread of thought continually broken by her own involuntary side-long observation of the man at her elbow.

A laughing interrogation in his glance prompted her to break a silence which she had felt awkward. "You travel long in Italy, *messer?*"

"One bound to Fortune's wheel as I am has no means of telling the duration of a turn," Talbot returned carelessly. "If ducats were as plentiful with me as time is, I should be a fatter prey than I am like to prove to the brigands who, they tell me, lurk in these mountains."

"There's worse than such in the mountains," said Fiamma. "My encounter with you was caused by the haste with which I sped last night from purgatorial flames leaping and twisting in the darkness like anguished souls."

Talbot laughed. "You, I dare say, were near enough to hear shrieks and vows of amendment proceeding from the dismal pit."

"Nay, I heard no shrieks," said Fiamma shortly, vexed by his evident raillery.

Whether or not the Englishman divined her displeasure, he continued speaking. "I had heard of such fires before I came here. It's a certain flame engendered by the soil, which breaking through the solid crust of earth, blazes on a hillside, the Mount of Fire, as they call it hereabouts."

Fiamma made no reply, a sullenness of mingled annoyance and fatigue chilling her into a resolve to prove no entertaining companion. Chafing at the hitch in her plans, which, for fear of causing a suspicion that might ruin everything, she had dared do nothing to avoid, she rode silently beside Talbot, brusquely refusing to share his noonday meal, and repulsing his attempts at conversation.

But as the lines of the Leaning Towers of Bologna came in sight, Talbot turned deliberately towards her. "You lodge doubtless with friends in the town, sir," he observed. "If it were otherwise, I should propose that we should still keep in fellowship, for I have heard that these Italian mountains spare a robber or two for the inns."

"I thank you; but I frequent too mean a lodging to be recommended to a stranger," Fiamma returned. "My foster-mother was of Bologna."

Talbot shrugged his shoulders with his usual gesture of careless assent, and made no further effort to alter

his companion's purpose. As the group of three stopped at a canvas-covered booth outside the massive masonry of the city-gateway, to receive on their thumbs the tiny speck of red wax that signified the receipt of the gate-money (without which no man could dare to enter the town), Fiamma was relieved to find that no attempt was made to follow her, the slightest farewell token being vouchsafed her as the Englishman in his turn threw down his crown on the tax-gatherer's counter.

The arcaded streets were glowing orange-tawny in the evening light as the girl passed along them, reluctantly conscious that it was too late for leaving the city, and scanning the signs for an inn sufficiently frequented by travellers for her advent to excite no suspicion. A huge gilded sausage, swinging halfway across a narrow alley, seemed at last to preside over the establishment of her quest, with the satisfactory additions of a purblind landlord and a wife absent on pilgrimage.

Flinging herself on the straw pallet of the chamber allotted to her, Fiamma almost instantly fell asleep, even before her portion of the steaming bowl of macaroni served for supper had been brought to her by a white-toothed serving-lass, hoping perhaps for a kiss and a *quattrino* from a handsome stranger. Scuffling and laughter from the common-room below passed unheard by her; but at last a firm light step, intermingled with heavier footfalls, sounded through her dreams insistently enough to make the girl's heavy eyelids unclose. They rested unconsciously for the instant, before they flashed fully open, upon the cool light smile of her acquaintance of the day.

Talbot, stripped to his hose and holland shirt, stood beside the bed, looking down in apparent half-mock-

ing expectation on Fiamma's start into an upright posture, but at the colour rushing to the edges of the hair, a faint surprise showed in his eyes.

"Your pardon, sir, but the landlord could find no other spot in which to bestow Giles and me," he remarked, with a glance over his shoulder at the man already snoring at the foot of another pallet. "Accept my apologies for waking you, but as this inn has not hung out the sign of Peter's key, it deserves no blame that its lodging-space for saints and sinners alike should have limits."

A vague suspicion, having nothing but fear to feed upon, stirred in his hearer uneasily. She lay down again, throwing her arm with the movement of a pettish speaker, across the face burning with its hot flushes. The impracticability of the situation oppressed Fiamma like a nightmare. "Keep your apologies with your speech till needed," she murmured, the anger of a terrified woman chiming naturally enough with the peevishness of a tired traveller but half-awakened. "To-morrow will bring weariness enough; the night is given to owls to screech in, but to men to sleep."

To her relief Talbot turned away unconcernedly, though to her startled senses the time seemed endless before a second regular breathing mingled with Giles's snores. The lines of the shutter serving for window were outlined in ashen light before the girl was able to grasp at the satisfaction of the thought that the city-gates would soon be opened, and, once stolen unobserved from the chamber, she would be free to follow the white road beyond, the road to Venice.

As, steadying her still shaking hands upon the Cardinal's gift, Fiamma waited for the dawn, a sound fainter than a gnawing mouse

struck on her ear. Her eyes, roving about the room, fastened a startled glance on the flat wooden bar securing the door. It was no fancy that it was moving, slipping backwards by hairs-breadths, under pressure of a dagger's point, introduced between door and lintel. Another second, and the woman's keen sight caught the glitter of a human eye peering at the opening.

Her hands twisted the crucifix in their steel-like grip, as, with the insight quicker than thought, the Cardinal's agent grasped the fact of thieves lurking outside the opening door. Even as she sprang up it yielded; with feminine instinct of defence she flung herself forward, parrying with uplifted crucifix a blow struck in a cat-like spring at the sleeping Talbot. To her own astonishment the thief reeled back, blood streaming from the arm into which she saw, bewildered, that she had struck a deadly-looking blade, the handle of which was formed by the upper portion of the crucifix.

Already the Englishmen were on their feet, the discharge of a horse-pistol filling the place with smoke, through which the robbers, breaking under Talbot's furious charge, tumbled to the stairway. Giles, bawling alternate invocations to the saints and shouts to the watch (prudently deaf to all such scenes), clattered after them, but in vain. As he returned, cursing the outer stair which had balked him of his quarry, his master turned to Fiamma with outstretched hand.

"You pay good interest on a debt!"

The slender bones of the girl's hand almost cracked in the Englishman's grasp, but the blue eyes seeking the hazel were clouded by what seemed a regret. Fiamma, still bewildered by the sudden scene, gazed from the dagger she held to the

sheathing wood which had dropped from it to the floor.

"St. George, that's a neat bit of work!" remarked Talbot. "A harmless-seeming crucifix as ever monk pattered prayers to, and a grim blade leaps to work on touching that nail in the Christ's palm! The cowed saint who hid that in the bosom of his frock, had a charm against bodily enemies, warranted to turn 'em into ghostly ones." He paused, looking frankly at Fiamma. "Religion and women! they should be the sweetest and best things on this trundling bowl of a world; and yet they are the causes of all the bloodshed that makes men ready to forswear one and the other."

"A man could scarce wish better causes to fight for," Fiamma returned, beginning as she spoke, to rearrange the dress disordered as much by the night's vigil as by the recent scuffle.

Talbot took a step forward, laying a hand on her shoulder. "No better," he agreed. "And I think that's why their cozening doubles are abroad, and seldom miss finding a strong arm and honest heart to strike a blow for a cause which deserves to fail." His hand leaned a thought more heavily on Fiamma's shoulder. "Such a rotten cause has a trick of breaking under the feet of those who have ventured upon it, sinking them into destruction."

"Your wit smells of the cloister, *messer*," Fiamma retorted, sheathing the dagger in the crucifix once more. "Your soul will doubtless profit, but women, I dare swear, will scarce savour a sermon in place of a song from the lips of so perfect a cavalier as yourself."

An impatient flush rose to Talbot's forehead. "Take your own road then in Heaven's name," he said. "An hour ago I would have sworn that the track was nearly at an end since

it had crossed mine, but you snatched my life in the nick from yon thieving cut-throats, and one good turn deserves another, as they say with us over-seas. Soon enough, it is like, the cards will be dealt for another round, and then a winning hand in the last serves the player little in the next, except that his stakes may be the heavier." He held out his hand with a quick smile. "Be it as it may, you've saved my life, and I would help you, if I might, to lengthen yours. Be warned by a friend, youngster, and journey to Prester John's country, if you will, but not to Venice."

Fiamma stealthily repressed a startled movement at the divination of an intention which she had fancied hidden, and looked her adviser squarely in the eyes. "All men do not journey towards Venice as surely as towards Purgatory," she said mockingly. "You put me in mind of a quack-doctor I once saw in a market-place. On the chance of finding an ailing man in the crowd, he pressed his drugs on those sound in wind and limb, as you would fain ram your bolus of good advice down my throat." She hesitated, with a quick change of mood at the hardening of the blue eyes looking back into hers. "Your pardon if I seem churlish," she went on impulsively, feeling inexplicably driven beyond caution, and brushing the curls from her brow in her accustomed gesture. "Indeed the sight of a brother's blood dims my eyes to the distorting of even kindly faces—"

She stopped, in the face of an unspoken question dawning in the other's look, lingering there during his strong grasp of farewell. It was with an odd feeling of depression that she passed down the unclean stairway, and, somewhat languidly setting to work as she went on a piece of

bread with the peculiar close grain of unleavened flour, made her way along the rounded arcades already growing warm in the morning sun.

CHAPTER VII.

THE varying excitements and fatigues that would have maimed any health and vigour less splendid than hers, exercised sufficient mastery during the day's journey to at least numb any other thought in her than a sense of satisfaction at the miles left behind under her steadily plodding feet. Purposely avoiding the highway she had struck away from Ferrara, and the low flats, left desolate by the retreat of the sea-line, proved heavy going. A chance muleteer (the red-tasselled panniers of whose mules were, Fiamma guessed, filled with illicit loads of salt) afforded her an unexpected lift, and, no doubt doing as he would be done by, betrayed no inconvenient curiosity on any detail of her journey. Under escort of his string of mules, Fiamma turned at nightfall into the single inn that disposed its withered bush to the brackish wind, her supper of calves' ears and beans relishing as well to her as the night's sleep in the vast kitchen sparsely lit by the fire of drift-wood and seaweed on the hearth. The simple companionship left the girl the lonelier when, on the noon of the next day, their roads parted, the muleteer turning aside to fetch another load less innocent than the wicker-covered wine-flasks, each stoppered with its vine-leaf, that ostentatiously topped his packs.

The district grew kindlier to the traveller's eyes, as with fresh breath she stepped on bravely. With every league the newness of the spring-time crept caressingly nearer in the alien marshes, taking seisin by the clasp of low-growing tendrilled green, elfin

heralds raising their blossom-trumpets in a summons of surrender to the waste. Fiamma, treading the tangle of paths twisting through emerald patches of rice-fields with pools sleeping here and there among the green growth, felt the soothing of monotony descend upon her, disturbed only at times when, through breaks in the waving spears, the purple bloom on distant hills showed faintly the rampart of white Venice sleeping at the lip of the sea.

But the drifting content was merely the mood of the hour. To the way-faring feet a blank stretch of water suddenly opposed itself, in length and breadth an actual lagoon, a right of way set by the distant sea on the half-reclaimed lands. The water lay in stagnant resentment of exile from the tumbling waves without. As Fiamma's eyes searched the sulien grayness for some sign of a ferry, her feet sank in the mud before she impatiently roused herself to the knowledge that she must accept the creek's rebuff, and set her face inland.

The wide sky was broadening in the evening light, as the pools began to grow slowly crimson, a suggestion of some shaft from the sunset smiting the world into smouldering flame. The rice-fields had resumed their sway, the pools were no longer brackish, and the thought of the progress achieved spurred Fiamma faster. She sped on, lifting her eyes to the jagged mountain-chain, when a sudden beating of a bird's wings among the rice-blades brought her to a stand.

A kite swung heavily into the air, joining a mate circling near. As Fiamma's glance followed the direction of its stoop, she perceived a woman with coarse garments dragged in the lurid water, rocking herself to and fro over a dead child on her knees. She looked up vacantly as

Fiamma came nearer, cringing away with the movement of a cowed thing, but as with a rush of swift woman's pity the girl knelt down, in a vague impulse of help chafing the tiny limp limbs, the other ceased to tremble.

"You are for Venice?" she said, with the babbling utterance of mental weakness. "Oh, be careful! their shadow broods over it, the shadow of Death!"

Fiamma's hand slid gently from the cold softness of the dead baby to the hand drooping inertly at the mother's side.

"Come with me," she urged. "Night is falling, and foul things," with a shuddering glance at the kites poised watchfully on the air, "are already on the wing. Come, we will carry the child between us, and find shelter among those hills."

The woman gazed dully at the child on her lap. "It fumbled my breast to the last with little craving lips," she murmured. "My husband's blood, my baby's milk, my woman's tears,—they have taken them all, and left me nothing! Nothing, nothing!" she repeated in moaning cadences.

Fiamma knelt by her in sad perplexity.

"Go not to Venice!" the woman whispered. "It was but a jest that my Nino uttered, and with the morning I found him washing up and down in the green water of our landing-stage, the stiletto between his shoulders! It was a heavy price for a poor gondolier to pay for his jest,—his life, *signore*, but they have no pity."

A shiver crept over Fiamma's shoulders, as the meaning of the speaker's impersonalities dawned upon her. "Come," she said again, drawing the child away with tender force. "Come, the dark is upon us, and we must leave these swamps behind us before we rest."

The woman sprang to her feet, flinging her arms wide. "The Ten! the Ten! the Ten!" she shrieked. "When I had my baby, I was silent, for the vengeance might still strike, but now I am free—free to call curses on them! Curse them!" she howled, leaping up and down on the narrow pathway. "May I live to call the curses home to them, as I used to call Nino's gondola home in the evening to the *piazzetta*!"

Exhausted by her passion, she turned gently to Fiamma, and the two moved forward, the girl belying her masculine attire oddly by carrying the baby's limp weight in the instinctive maternal clasp which some women possess. Clusters of lights glimmering through the dusk told of a village under the lee of the hills towards which the ground beneath the wayfarers' feet was already rising.

"You have kin in Venice?" the Florentine asked at last, more for the sake of interrupting the pitiful moaning at her side, than from curiosity. The question had to be repeated before it penetrated to the other's dulled brain.

"My father," she answered then. "He is a snail-gatherer, but he was proud of his only daughter's snug lodging in the street of the Black Hat, just opposite the Madonna with the seven swords in her heart. She has no swords now; she gave them all to me when I found Nino dead there by the landing-stage, with the water lapping in his curls. Such curls! I combed them out every Sabbath, and on all the *festas*—"

The heart-rending moans began again, and Fiamma could only gently hurry her along the grass-bordered street of the village they had now reached. That day, after the muleteer's departure, the girl had profited by solitude to exchange the black and

red suit, of Cassandra's providing, for garments bought from a second-hand booth before she left Bologna, and which, being those of an ordinary Venetian gentleman, she had concluded were the least likely to court observation. The mail-shirt, fashioned for one as slender as herself, still hung about her shoulders, but the diabolic livery, weighted by a large stone, lay securely in the dark depths of a marshy water. Meanwhile, the furred black mantle affording glimpses of the green brocaded gown underneath, was sufficiently worn to excite no attention from keener observers than the folk of the cottages perched on the Euganean slopes.

Curiosity, easy to parry, was indeed provoked by the appearance of the wanderers with their piteous burden, and Fiamma felt it convenient that the Venetian accent puzzled the mountaineers, so that the business of framing judiciously vague answers developed on herself. The old priest, through whose medium most of the conversation was conducted, consented,—after a cautious search for plague-spots, incomprehensible enough to Fiamma's ignorance of the scourge which had as yet spared the mountain-pastures—to the dead infant being placed for the night on the bier before the altar of the tiny chapel. The mother, crouched beside it, had sunk into a tearless vigil before the salt sweetness of crushed fern floated in a soothing narcotic about Fiamma's curling head, nestled to sleep on a soft pile of green.

Before she slept, she had convinced herself from the villagers that, in spite of the poor widow's crazed wanderings of a week past, Venice lay, by certain passes over the hills, within a day's journey. She was awake and ready for the road again before even the goats, rattling their horns sleepily against the walls of the hut which

had received her, had begun to low for their pasture. A smile creased a long dimple in the brown cheek as Fiamma reflected that Cardinal Ferdinando's well-poised mind would see only a flaw of sentimental womanishness in the passage of one of his gold pieces from her hand to the priest, in trust for her unfortunate companion of the previous night.

Munching a handful of chestnuts pressed on her by her hospitable entertainers, she stepped briskly through the village towards the pass indicated to her as her road. Spring was odorous in the hills with the incense of lily-of-the-valley, constellations of myrtle, and flowering sprays of heath. The beauty of grass blossoming into a radiance of celandine, periwinkles, and waxen rosy chalices of a low-growing pasture-plant, woke in the absorbed traveller a vague recollection of the pride of her late convent, the picture where the painter, among the shades of the ilex-thickets of his cloister, had apparently dipped his brush in such very hues, staining the garments of his folk in Paradise to the delicate unshadowed brightness of the flowers.

But Fiamma, crushing the petals with quick light steps, pressed on too fast for any fancy to follow. Splintered peaks and ridges, veiled at the outset in blue haze, in the full sunshine lifted their fantastic outlines at times like beckoning fingers and again like forbidding lances to the wanderer, hurrying through the defiles they guarded. The thought of the day lost through the encounter with the Englishman beat in vexing reiteration through Fiamma's brain, and through her speed she tried to calculate how soon the Capelli might be expected in Venice, with a satirical suspicion that the ambitious lady's movements were not likely to be hampered by

an over-strict conformity to the regulations of widowhood.

The wind blew coldly about her as she climbed higher, the occasional note of a cow-bell breaking the silence that held the mountain. Fiamma had crested the pass, springing down its descent with the adroitness and seeming carelessness of the inbred mountaineer. She swung sharply round a corner of rock flinging herself back so promptly as to measure her length on the shale-strewn track.

In front of her, its flakes of spume wetting her face as she lay, dashed a mountain torrent setting a silver bar to her further progress. Fiamma's white teeth caught her lip in vexation as she realised that the leaping waters wiped out her day's toil, that she must turn back to recover the road missed, it must have been, earlier in her way. But turning back in a path once struck into was foreign to Fiamma's blood. Even as she lay, her eye was caught by a birch-tree, pluming a mossy boulder, and shaking its green spray of young leaves out over the restless spray of white. In an instant Fiamma was on her feet, measuring with her thought the slender column of silver-rinded stem, and the chasm through which the cascade hurled itself, the opposite wall of rock of which lay some feet below. With scarcely more delay than a bird would make in the instant between spreading its wings and leaving the twig vibrating under the impetus of his flight, the girl had clasped the birch-bole, swinging herself with it towards a crag jutting on the other side.

But the winter work of the worm, curled in the green pillar under the silver rind, was not to go for nothing. As the birch-stem curved it snapped with a sudden rending of wood and flaky outer tissue; and under the green spray of the branches swirled

along the torrent a face, white as the hungry waters, showed for a second's glimpse. Yet Fiamma, bruised and buffeted, fought for her life, catching, with hands steady notwithstanding the danger, at a mass of bracken past which she was swept, the cord-like fibre of stem offering sufficient resistance to her grasp for a desperate twist and strain upwards over shelves of rock worn by the fierce waterfall into giant stairs.

Panting, bleeding, trembling, she struggled to her feet, to fall back with an intolerable stab of pain. A cry burst from the lips which had grown white. To climb with a strained side down mountain gorges seemed impossible; equally so the alternative, to crouch in the grasses beside the incessant resonance of the waterfall, through which a cry would fall dumb as the shriek with which a sleeper struggles to pierce the terror of his dream.

Fiamma sat above the tumult of waters and cursed the recklessness that so often tripped up her prudence; but a curse, launched after lost game, retrieves but poorly. Beads of pain broke out on her forehead, as she resolutely set herself to crawl on hands and knees down the steep hill-path, never slackening her onward efforts, though with each movement the pallor under the clear brown skin showed more livid.

The child of the *castello* had set a nearer goal than Venice before her. More than once she had pushed aside the bushes overhanging her, listening, with ears trained by the mountain, for bell-music shaken out on the hill-side by a feeding flock. At each pause the mellow ripples sounded nearer. At the last listening interval, the girl detected a plaintive piping mingling with the chiming, and crept on with a new courage, to emerge with unexpected suddenness on an

island set about with chestnut trees, in the fitting shadows of which a shepherd sat idly fluting on his reed-pipe.

Fiamma called to him imperatively. "I have fallen and lamed myself in these accursed mountains," she said, recognising in the face, lined with the pressing petty cares of a life lived in limited perspective, immunity to indulge in frankness; "yet I must on to Venice to-day if possible." She glanced calculatingly at the sun, blazing in the molten blue above the chestnuts. "If you have a mule I will pay you well for it."

"No mule, *signor*." The shepherd's glance strayed in simple curiosity over the garments steaming in the sunshine, and at the white resolute face above them. "No mule, since ours which used to carry the cheeses to the marshes was set on by the wolves, when it broke its leg in a ravine last winter." He paused. "If the *signor* must journey to Venice, there's nothing for it but a shepherd's chair."

"I will give you good *scudi* if you can indeed get me forward," Fiamma interrupted stimulatingly.

The man nodded, sending out his pipe in a shrill scale, answered at intervals by running goats. The clustering of the silent-footed creatures about the bare-armed man, clad in a sheepskin girt to his waist, seemed curiously dream-like to Fiamma wavering in the mists of pain and fatigue in the debateable land betwixt sleeping and waking. Suddenly raising the long lashes fallen unawares she found herself alone in the sunny patch of pasture, the last note of the bell fading from her ears like music beating out of sleep heard still in the first moment of waking.

The solitude of the pasture was soothing. The small head, with its locks curling more closely for their

recent bath, drooped again on the sunny turf, sweet with a hundred spices of leaf and blossom. Drifting into sleep the girl lay; pressing her face against the warm earth, she seemed to herself to move, to be swept into some dim dance of figures, circling, now fast, now slow, to the strange toll of a bell. She herself held a partner's hand and tried to see the shadowy face,—ah, it was that of the Capelli. Another figure was winding its way to them, a skeleton King Death, as she had seen it once in some *campo santo*; but instead of an hour-glass the bony hand held a bell, and one after another broke out of the dance to follow the summons. Fiamma's heart throbbed to bursting; must she place the warm living hand she held in that ghostly one? Oh, she must break the circle, but at the thought the dancers whirled fast, barring her way, and Death caught her to him, bearing her shrinking on his fleshless shoulder away from them all, and bade her look at him. And, because she must, she raised her head to the face above her, and it was bronzed, blue-eyed, and it was the Englishman's voice that whispered, "Journey not now to Venice but—"

The grasp of a human hand brought her panting to her feet, striving in the first struggle out of the surges of sleep to dash aside the withholding touch, before she recognised the uncouth figure of the shepherd. The satyr-like form had twisted hay-bands over his sheepskin garment, thus supporting a small board or seat strapped firmly on his shoulders. With an encouraging grin, displaying his sharp yellow teeth, he knelt close beside Fiamma.

"I warrant the *signor* has never seen a shepherd's chair before," he said. "It's safe for all its looks, if a great gentleman will condescend to trust himself to the conveyance which

bears our women, too old or too sick to tramp it with a stout staff, well enough up and down these hills." His rustic simplicity withstood Fiamma's glance, suspicious of mockery. "Courage, *signor*," he went on kindly. "Seat yourself on the wood, and bind our bodies together with this rope. Pity," he went on at the flush and pallor overspreading Fiamma's face at her first movement, "that my wife was piped to Paradise last Martinmas; she had a plaster of lily-leaves that wiled soreness from a man's bones faster than salt brings the sheep about one. *Madonna*, I have scarce seen mortal to speak to till the clouds husked you down, *signor*!" he added, steadying himself on his long staff and plunging into the shadows of the chestnut-wood.

The relief of the lily-plaster could scarcely have equalled the relief to the girl of the knowledge that each swinging step, tormentingly painful though it was to her strained side, nevertheless set her forward. Already her mind began to turn with curiosity, too vague at first for uneasiness, towards the question of how her entrance into Venice was to be effected. As the hills drew back their green skirts from the dun expanse of marshes that began to set a darker rim to the horizon, she pressed an imperative hand on her bearer's shoulder.

"Boats with cheeses, fuel, and the like, ply through these marsh-channels to Venice!" she said tentatively. "Is a strict watch kept on them by the customs?"

"Strict enough, *signor*," the shepherd returned. "Tis hard for an honest man to make a profit. *Santissima*, if St. Peter has as keen eyes at the gate of Paradise as the Ten have for a spoonful of salt that has not paid its tax, no fear of a poor soul smuggling itself before its time out of Purgatory!"

Fiamma did not answer. The two had paused for a brief rest, sitting side by side on a thinly-grassed stretch, the rind of the marsh on which the guide had at last entered, following with the careless precision of habit, the windings of a brackish water-channel. A sky, in which rosy fleeces of cloud swam like a fairy argosy in a flood of blue, glowed in front of her into fusing tints of smoky gold, from which flames of light darted like swords of the cherubim into the evening peace.

Against the orange horizon a vision of towers and domes showed blackly out of a purple sea—Venice! The sight struck on Fiamma's heart as a challenge reverberates through the champion's pavilion. Yet as the shadow of night saps the sunset glory, a sinister thought crept into the moment's jubilancy. Venice! When and how should she leave it?

Striving to see no omen in the natural prompting of a physical depression, Fiamma resumed her narrow seat, watching with unseeing eyes the water spouting wide under the bare legs that strode the channels cheerily.

"*Ecco!*" exclaimed her conductor, stopping before a reed-thatched shed. "I can bear your Excellency no longer, but there will be little difficulty in finding a boat to bring the *signor* yonder."

He pointed vaguely over the lagoon widening before them, the mist that moved upon it, imparting the effect of a ghostly procession gliding across the waste of water. Fiamma leant against the lintel of the empty hut, trying through her weariness to seize on the best course of action, ready one moment to dare all, with the next distrusting the rashness,—the inevitable warp in feminine courage.

A single black speck on the water, no bigger than a cormorant, caught her eye. It sailed unawares on the

surface of her thought, as the deeper current surged against her perplexity.

"A disguise of some wandering friar; but there's no way of procuring a disguise quickly, and time hatches evil," she reflected. "The best is to bribe one of these barges to bring me hidden under a load of its cargo, and that sets one or more tongues wagging." With a disheartened sigh she turned towards her guide, to address him tersely. "Speech is silver and silence golden, and you'll find it golden if you keep it about bestowing me on one of those barges we spoke of but now." She hesitated. "A lady's in the case," she finished bluntly.

A look of simple sagacity twinkled under the puckered eyelids. "Aye, aye, one end of the cord which pulls up-hill and down-dale is most times in a woman's fingers," chuckled the shepherd. "My sister Nanni's husband is on one of those boats yonder; he should find it no hard matter to stow a slim youth like yourself under a pile of nets,—for a price, that is to say, *signor*, for, to say truth, his wife has taught him that to help any man to matrimony is not like to be a work of charity. But he will be silent, *signor*; seventeen years of Nanni's tongue have taught him to hold his own."

Fiamma's eyes followed his gesticulating fingers towards a group of tall-sailed fishing-boats, beyond the bare flats arteried by lines of blackish water such as flowed sluggishly at her feet. The shepherd unfastened a rough raft moored to one of the stakes, indicators in reed-like clusters of the navigable channels between groups of

submerged sand-islands. "Twill be well to strike the bargain and enter Venice before the dawn blows out the stars," he remarked. "The folk of the *calli* like their milk and cheese in good time o' mornings."

He paddled into the low water with an ease which made Fiamma suspect that smuggling was not the lost art that he had implied it. As, her arms slung about her knees, she crouched upon the raft, the black speck of her former notice began to take shape as a gondola. Under the pole it floated hither and thither, seemingly questing upon the waters like a hound at fault. The fishing-sails were showing umber in the evening light as Fiamma turned her gaze on them, idly noticing the huge figure of St. Christopher embroidered upon the nearest. Her swerving glance again fell upon the gondola, as with a hawk's swoop it bore down upon the raft, the bright steel of its prow seeming to cleave the dark water into which it glimmered. As it came, the sweep of the long oar ceased, till the boat lay in the wash of the ripples.

The tarnished splendour of the west glittered on the steel prow, and fell in a quivering line of light downwards from the rower's outstretched hand, as he held toward Fiamma a tress of amber hair that hung from his fingers to the black poop on which he stood. The woman at the window in Florence had such hair.

Fiamma followed her adventure, and stepped into the gondola, as the thickening mist drew about it like a shroud.

(To be continued.)

OPERA AND DRAMA.

THE simple purpose of this paper is to suggest that the time has come when we in England, at all events, should cease to use that awkward and un-English compound, *music-drama*, and should return altogether to the older and simpler term, *opera*. For although the general public is sensible enough to speak of Wagner's operas, the term music-drama is still used by superior persons as a kind of shibboleth of orthodoxy. Shibboleths were all very well while the disciples were a Church Militant, but now that they are triumphant there should be no more need of them. Nor has the disciple even the excuse of the master's example. The English disciple may have been misled into thinking the expression Wagner's own by the use of the term in some of Messrs. Schott's English versions of the piano-scores; but Wagner himself never used it. He indeed criticised it most unkindly, calling it a senseless name apparently invented in honour of his own later works, and then usurped by imitators. Up to LOHENGRIN he called his works operas; after that, when he put any description on his title-pages, the word he used was *Handlung*, which is a German word for the Greek word drama. PARISFAL, as we all know, was a *Bühnenweihfestspiel*, a stage-consecration-festival-play! He did not quite dare, or he would have called his operas simply dramas; it was so that he regarded them. Being pre-eminently endowed with the genius of dramatic music he came to believe that opera was the natural and final form of drama; and that as Beethoven's symphonies wanted words, so

Shakespeare's dramas wanted music. Thus it must be confessed that if the superior disciples have no authority from the master for the use of the word music-drama, they have at least some excuse for thinking that in using it they are expressing the master's meaning. They call TRISTAN UND ISOLDE and DER RING DES NIEBELUNGEN music-dramas, for the same reason that Wagner ceased to call them operas, to indicate, namely, to all whom it may concern, that the aim is no longer to provide showy pieces for operatic stars nor to supply a back-ground for the gossip of fashionable society, but to produce serious drama expressed in music.

Thanks to Wagner's faith, energy, and genius, his aim having been accomplished, the emphasis on the dramatic side of his operas, which is the purpose of the term music-drama, has become unnecessary as well as misleading. There are several kinds of opera, just as there are several kinds of drama. There is no more danger now of confusing Wagner with Donizetti by calling the works of both operas, than there is of confusing Shakespeare with Mr. Bernard Shaw by calling the works of both plays. Wagner did not originate the idea that opera was meant for drama in music. Opera at the beginning in Italy in the eighteenth century was meant for music-drama in the modern sense, and indeed with much the same idea as Wagner had of reproducing the effect of the drama of ancient Greece. The musical means at the disposal of the early Italian composers were very different from those

at Wagner's disposal, but the aim was the same. Opera is the historical name of music-drama; and it did not first begin to be opera when the *prima donna* had her way with it.

But the term is worse than unnecessary; it is misleading. Wagner himself, musician as he was first and foremost, was to some extent the dupe of his own distinction. Laying so much stress on drama, he sometimes permitted himself to speak as if it was absolutely for drama to lead and for music to follow, and to assume that music was able to follow wherever drama chose to lead. Seeing clearly and seeing justly how impossible it was to compose a great drama to fit what he called a tightly-built scaffolding of musical forms, he went, in theory at all events, to the other extreme, and encouraged the composer of opera to produce, or procure, a fine drama regardless of the prerogative of music, assuring him that the music would flow naturally out of the words and situations, and vouching his own experience as a musician that by this procedure his own music had gained as much in breadth and freedom as had his drama. He kept insisting that in this marriage of music and drama, the drama was the male element, while to music was to be assigned the woman's part of absolute submission. In some important matters, it will be noticed, Wagner was still old-fashioned. This statement of his doctrine has misled both friends and foes. It has been gravely argued, for example, that since Shakespeare is a greater dramatist than Wagner, and since in *OTELLO* Verdi's music is employed to enforce the dramatic effect of Shakespeare's play, therefore on Wagner's own principles *OTELLO* must be a greater music-drama than *TRISTAN UND ISOLDE* or *GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG*. On the other hand it has been con-

tended that Wagner's operas ought to be, and would be, playable without the music. I suspect that the master himself would not have lacked the courage to face this illegitimate ordeal.

If Wagner was able to give his whole attention first to his drama, it was only because his predominant endowment was the genius of dramatic music. When he had written his drama, the music did follow. It sprang out of the words and situations, but only because it was already presupposed in them. It is impossible to read the correspondence with Liszt without perceiving that Wagner wrote his words and composed his drama with a subconsciousness, if not with a clear consciousness, of the destined musical expression. He calls himself somewhere a poet conscious in advance of the faculty of musical expression for the working out of poems. How well aware he was that not every drama would do for opera is shown by one feature of his work, which has often been adversely criticised,—his choice of legendary subjects. It may be admitted that legendary subjects are not the only subjects for opera, yet the reason Wagner gave for his choice touches the true root of the distinction between opera and drama, and shows a right insight into the limits of subject-matter for opera. He chose legend, he explained, because in legend, "Those conventional forms of human relations, explicable only to abstract reason, disappear almost entirely, and in their place stands that which is for ever comprehensible, being purely human."

Wagner touches here an essential distinction between opera and drama; and it is because the distinction has tended to become obscured by his insistence on the dramatic element in opera, and by the consequent use by his followers of the term music-drama, that I plead for its discontinuance.

The medium of the spoken drama is language ; and language is the natural expression of thought. The drama of opera has to be expressed in music ; and music is the natural expression of emotion, and, at its deepest and truest, of emotion only. The words of an opera may deal with any subject, but the music will only properly express their meaning so long as they convey or suggest emotion. The opposition need not be made too absolute. Thought and emotion are not absolutely sundered, but are very subtly interfused. Emotion will intrude into one of Smith's LEADING CASES, just as logic may lurk in a love-letter. Manifestly the spoken drama is not cut off from the expression of emotion. Language is the universal means of human communication, and men and women must communicate their emotions as well as their perceptions and ideas. Spoken drama accordingly has the means to cover the whole field of which opera can cultivate only a part ; but on this limited plot opera raises a very different kind of crop.

The essential difference, in short, between drama and opera is that just what is easy for drama is difficult for opera, and what is easy for opera is difficult for drama. It would be as difficult to set Smith's LEADING CASES to music, as it admittedly is for lovers to express their feelings adequately in words. "What is too silly to say, is sung," said Voltaire, speaking, however, not of lovers but of the librettists. Speech, if capable of declaring emotion, is not the natural language of emotion. Stress of emotion leaves us dumb, we say. It is precisely the special and rare gift of the poet to express in language the emotions that others feel and cannot utter ; and even the poet has to work his miracle not directly, but by symbol and suggestion and association, aided by verbal melody and rhythm. Only

Shakespeare, and Shakespeare only in a few scenes, can make drama out of the mere emotion of love ; and even in ROMEO AND JULIET how much there is besides mere emotion. M. Maeterlinck seems sometimes to be writing opera without music. The effect he seeks painfully with Ollendorffian repetitions, the old melodrama achieved simply and successfully with a *tremolo* on the strings. That which is so hard for language is easy and natural to music ; almost any musician can make a song passionate or a love-scene dramatic. Moreover music can spread over a whole act emotions which the dramatist is reduced to calling in the actor to express for him by look or gesture.

Miserere, Domine !

The words are utter'd, and they flee.
Deep is their penitential moan,
Mighty the pathos, but 'tis gone.
They have declared the spirit's sore
Sore load, and words can do no more.
Beethoven takes them then — those two
Poor, bounded words—and makes them new ;
Infinite makes them, makes them young ;
Translates them to another tongue,
Where they can now, without constraint,
Pour all the soul of their complaint,
And roll adown a channel large
The wealth divine they have in charge.
Page after page of music turn,
And still they live and still they burn,
Eternal, passion-fraught, and free—
Miserere, Domine !

The difficulties of opera, on the other hand, begin just where the actor and dramatist are most at home, —in action, character, and intellectual situation. Music is powerless to deal with a thousand and one elements that may go to make a good drama. It expresses the storm of passions and the pathos of feeling with the same pomp of its tones, whether Agamemnon and Achilles, or the dissensions of a

citizen's family, furnish the matter of the piece. Social distinctions, the conventions of civilisation, the subject of so much drama, are wholly beside the means of musical expression, which moreover can find no tones for intellectual ideas, nor even represent differences of character other than emotional differences. If a Wagnerian *leit-motiv* does not express the heart of the character, it becomes a mere trade-mark, as Mark Twain calls the symbols of the saints in the old painters.

It is accordingly only in the emotional crises of any ordinary drama that music is an appropriate means of expression. The composers of opera as a rule have made no effort to disguise the fact. In the popular French and German opera, for instance, it was only in the emotional scenes that music was introduced, the intermediate business of the drama proceeding by spoken dialogue; the "joining of the flats" was hardly more artfully disguised by that dreary method which went by the appropriate name of *recitativo secco*. Wagner, of course, has been immeasurably more successful in imparting musical interest to the more pedestrian parts of the drama. "For my own part," he wrote, "I am conscious of having if not achieved, at least deliberately striven for one advantage, the raising of the dramatic dialogue itself to the main subject of musical treatment, whereas in opera proper the moments of lyrical delay and most violent arrest of the action had hitherto been deemed the only ones of possible service to the musical composition." Well, thanks in the first place to the fact that his *libretti* are the work of a musician and so emotionally and musically conceived, and thanks in the next place to the picturesqueness and expressiveness of his leading motives and his inex-

haustible resource in combining and modifying them, he did achieve wonders; yet in Wagner also there is no difficulty in discriminating what the lawyers call the common form from the operative parts. Perhaps only in *TRISTAN UND ISOLDE*, created as it is from the first bar to the last out of sheer emotion, is there no scaffolding perceptible. Even in *DER RING DES NIEBELUNGEN* and *PARSIFAL* you find him occasionally compelled to fall back on a mere mechanical repetition of his leading motives to fill the logical interstices of the drama.

Many spectators will, I imagine, have observed a curious converse difficulty of the drama in music. Music, I have said, can spread over a whole act emotions that an actor must express by a glance or a gesture. Music is so necessarily and naturally impelled to express the emotional import of a situation that it often demands more time for the purpose than the actors can conveniently afford it. There is in almost all Wagner's operas a situation in which the actors are hard put to it to know what to do with themselves while the orchestra is discoursing at large of love and fate, or is interpreting the actors' emotions with incomparable power, but at a length that leaves them looking decidedly foolish. There is, for example, the entry of the Flying Dutchman, when the doomed wanderer and the girl who has so long nursed a tender pity for his fate meet for the first time face to face. There is the kiss with which Siegfried wakes the sleeping Valkyrie to mortal womanhood and mortal love, where the embarrassed actors remain with their lips glued together for a most unconventional length of time while the fiddles flutter into infinitudes of ecstasy. There is the fateful entry of Tristan into Isolde's pavilion (a passage

so tremendous, it has been said, that even Jean de Reszke hardly dare face it), and the draining of the cup of love and death that follows. The operatic actor as a rule has but a few familiar gestures at his command, and on these occasions they compete ineffectually and with conspicuous difficulty against Wagner's wealth of orchestral expression.

Such, taken somewhat at random, are some of the differences between opera and drama. The essential difference indeed is so obvious that I may appear to have laboured it needlessly. Yet I cannot but think that Wagner himself sometimes missed its moral and was, as I have said, the dupe of his own desire to distinguish his new musical drama from the old opera. In his zeal of controversialist and reformer to get away as far as possible from the operatic conventions of his day, he took upon him some burdens and made some sacrifices which he was in no wise bound to make or take. How many of his truest admirers must have regretted that his dramatic scruples banished almost entirely from *DER RING DES NIEBELUNGEN* and *TRISTAN UND ISOLDE* concerted vocal music, for which he had before, as in the second act of *TAN-HÄUSER*, shown, and was again in the *MEISTERSINGER* and *PARSIFAL* to show, so great capability. All art has its conventions, legitimate so long as they heighten, not hamper the effect. The chorus is a convention of opera as of Greek drama; and a convention more or less in opera, what is it? Even the beautiful *arias* introduced at inopportune moments, the common scoff of Wagnerian critics, are not seldom defensible. The question is whether the jar of improbability is or is not compensated by the musical and emotional gain. A pause for vocal interpretation is at all events no less defensible than the pause for

instrumental commentary. There must, however, as Mrs. Malaprop says, be a decorum in these matters. When as in the celebrated quartet in *RIGOLETTO*, two persons inside a house and two outside, supposed to be unconscious of each other's presence, harmonise their remarks in correct time and tune, perhaps the limits of legitimate convention have been overstepped.

Wagner's theory hampered his practice, again, in the supposed dramatic necessity of making his music follow his words syllable by syllable, without repetitions, as if they were being said not sung. This practice does undoubtedly conduce to dramatic propriety and effect in a piece of narrative or logical dialogue: but it matters little when you come to the emotional climaxes. There the music is all in all, given the emotional basis of the situation. Emotion in language craves repetitions, and is above logical coherence. An Amen chorus has as much dramatic propriety as the strictest of Wagnerian settings. As Mr. Robert Bridges has asked, because in the musical drama that must be sung which should be spoken, why try to make that seem to be spoken which should be sung? I do not suppose that one hearer in a hundred understands a tithe of what Tristan and Isolde are talking about in the great duet. Wagner happened at the time he wrote the piece to be full of Schopenhauer and Buddha; and he puts into these Celtic lovers' lips a love-talk curiously compounded of the creeds of pessimism and *nirvana*. As it happens, it goes very well not only with the sliding semitones, but with the contrast, conventional in the troubadours' love-poetry and magically revitalised in this ultra-modern music between the odious daylight of duty and the sweet night-season of deliverance. But so far as the words

really matter, the lovers might be simply calling each other by name in passionate antiphonies, as Wagner so often makes them do, with the true instinct that for the lover the only adequate language is the name of the beloved. And under the all-embracing caress of the orchestra, logic is swallowed up in the surge and reflux of musical emotion.

If, then, occasionally the insistence on drama misled the great musician himself, much more has it misled the common critic and ordinary playgoer. It is, I believe, responsible for much popular disappointment and much consequent popular condemnation of Wagner. The ordinary man's notion of what is dramatic (and that not without high critical authority to back him) is action, action, and again action. Led to expect drama in Wagnerian opera, he goes expecting action, and he indignantly resents duets that go round the clock, without so much as a fist clenched. But, as we have seen, dramatic action of the kind looked for is just a thing music cannot express. I suppose every listener who is at all musical has felt the degradation, when the music drops from the reverie of Elsa and the anxious tenderness of Lohengrin to the marking of the lists and the fight with Telramund, or from the ecstasy of Tristan and the yearning of Isolde to the business of barricading the gates against the coming of Mark. People with some reason call this endless play of emotion undramatic, and think that thereby Wagner stands condemned out of his own mouth. Whereas by great good fortune and the instinct of genius he had in the legend of Tristan put his hand on one of the few world-stories perfectly adapted for opera, because essentially expressible in music. The idea of it came

to him in a flash when he was in the very middle of the composition of *DER RING DES NIEBELUNGEN*. In the autumn of 1854, three full years before he set to work on it, he gave Liszt in a letter an extraordinarily just forecast of it; it is in the same letter, by the way, that he proclaims the sovereignty of Schopenhauer among philosophers.

As in my life [he wrote] I have never tasted the true happiness of love, I mean yet to raise a monument to this most beautiful of all dreams, a work in which love shall from beginning to end find for once its full and perfect satisfaction. I have sketched in my head a *TRISTAN UND ISOLDE*, a musical conception absolutely simple and at the same time abounding in sap and life; and in the black flag which flies at the close, I will enshroud myself—to die.

Wagner changed his mind about dying; happily, because the music of *DIE MEISTERSINGER*, *SIEGFRIED*, *GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG*, and *PARSIFAL* was yet to come. He also changed his mind about the black flag (in the legend, bye-the-bye, it is a black sail) wisely rejecting an attempt to introduce at the end of his opera the second Isolde of the White Hands. Otherwise the flash of prevision was exact. The opera is all compact of the passion of love. It is love in the first act, love disguised as hate till the constraining spell of the magic cup sweeps the lovers into each other's arms; love in the second act indulged and satiated, till it is transfigured into devotion by the touch of death's imminent wing; love in the last act, in the passionate and delirious memories of the wounded Tristan, till the lovers are reunited in the tragic ecstasy of their death, a climax and conclusion perhaps unparalleled in art. This apotheosis of sheer emotion is for opera,—not for drama.

W. P. JAMES.

A DYING KINGDOM.

THE sights which are presented by modern Asia seem specially fashioned for the purpose of stimulating the imagination. They are compact of strange paradoxes and unlikely contradictions. Here is a land of darkness under sun-glare, of idyllic simplicity and virtue cheek by jowl with vice, treachery, wickedness unspeakable, cruelty that is satanic, tyranny, misrule, oppression; a land in which barren places sprout into a new, strong life suddenly at a whisper of the white man's will, and kingdoms old in story decay and putrefy in unsightly abjectness and squalor. It is the battle-ground of the new and the old; the spot where modern things and things very ancient meet in the death-grapple; where antiquated notions of right and wrong, of fitness and unfitness, die hard, as old things are wont to do, and new ideas spring into being and flourish with the heartless insolence of youth. We white men know the good from the bad. Our theories are the result of centuries of self-discipline, of education, and of deep thought. The customs and the kingdoms of Asia fall down before our trumpet-blast as did the walls of Jericho of old; and if we leave a train of broken things behind us, who among us shall dare to doubt that our revolutions tend to the greatest good of the greatest number?

None the less, obtrusive sentiment thrusts itself forward and will not be denied. If death be terrible, the act of dying is infinitely more awful to witness; and to any thinking man, who stands for a little space aloof from the moving life around him, and

watches with tenderness and compassion the throes and agonies which attend the passing of Asia's old and weary soul, the spectacle is one which reaches near to the kind fount of tears. The degradation, the plaintiveness, the abject impotence of kingdoms which once were proud and insolent, overbearing to their neighbours, cruel to their foes, ruthless to all alike, and powerful and mighty with a strength that then defied rivalry, are felt to be things monstrous and contaminating. A man feels that by merely witnessing these kingdoms in decay he is committing an act in itself indecent and merciless; that to pry at ugliness which were better hidden from the light of day is an unpardonable cruelty; that, in a sense, the degradation is contagious; that a man is less a man because his eyes have looked upon things so unclean and so repulsive in their death-agonies. We all know the sick horror which seizes us when we see some hideous creature, maimed and mangled, twisting under foot in a detestable impotence of pain, dying, but dying with the slowness which prolongs and intensifies the acuteness of its misery. We all know with what a frenzied haste we strike, and strike, and strike again to end the horror, to put the writhing thing beyond the reach of pain. Much the same feeling possesses the man who looks upon a dying Asiatic kingdom during the last disgraceful moments of its repulsive existence. He longs to make it cease; to cleanse the world of this stain upon its fair fame; to wipe out hurriedly the mildew whose foulness seems to

degrade humanity since it has spread its leprosy over a portion of our kind. And yet, behind all this passion of disgust there lurks another feeling, a certain tenderness and regret, born of that unreasoning love of ancient things, things with a glorious past, which all men know in greater or in lesser measure. Shadowy and unreal the spectre of the past rises and hallows the meanness of the present. In imagination we see again the mighty kingdom dominating its world; we see the gorgeous elephants trooping through the streets; the bales of rich merchandise which made the wealth of the land; the serried ranks of the brown warriors crowding the *prahus* when the king went forth to battle; and above all we see men ruling men, as men were wont to be ruled in those raw and blood-stained days. Ichabod, Ichabod, the glory hath departed! But its glamour clings to the sorry rags of greatness, and its shadow hovers over them chastening the ugliness of to-day.

Not long ago I visited Brunei, the moribund kingdom whose name, which has shared in its corruption, gave its title to the greatest island of the East. Disgust, horror, contempt, repulsion, and an unreasoning feeling of contamination, all held me in their grip as I viewed the miserable wreck of past glory. It seemed to me that the death-rattle sounded ceaselessly in my ears, that I could catch the faltering beat of a dying heart which once had pulsed so strongly, that the place looked upon me with glazing eyes that were like those of a creature in sore agony. My gorge rose at the dirt, the squalor, and at things worse than either, and infinitely worse than death which may come in a moment of full fruition, the splendid consummation of a splendid life. And as the night fell, and the place sank to rest beneath the sad moon, which rising there had

looked of old upon so glorious a past, the pity and the sorrow of the land rose too to haunt me like a spectre, until the flowing tide swirled about the keel and gave us leave to depart into the clean and open seas.

My little steam-yacht, rolling gently to the rocking of the slow swell, thrust her nose through the long line of driftwood which marked the limit of the river's seaward flow, and entered the zone of paler water which surrounded the estuary of Brunei. Behind us, seemingly afloat upon the quiet sea, lay little islands smothered in foliage to the water's edge; before us the mainland of Borneo rose in a tumble of low hills, grass-grown or spattered with secondary scrub, with line upon line of faint blue mountains set against the paleness of a white-hot sky. As we neared the shore and began to enter the river, grassy slopes on either hand seemed to run down to the water to meet us with a kindly welcome. In them we saw the first tokens of departed wealth. Once, long ago, the strong stream of emigration, which sets eternally from the crowded mud-hovels of southern China, broke in numberless waves upon the western coast of Borneo, and Brunei, the head and front of native kingdoms, absorbed the labourers and waxed fat upon their toil. All these packs of grass-grown hills were then thriving pepper-gardens or groves of rich spices, and the strong hands which ruled the lawless land secured safety for the folk who sought only riches, and were content to offer a liberal tribute. But later there arose weaker men, the effete offspring of a mighty race, and the geese, which of old had laid such golden eggs, were killed or plucked, till the survivors spread their wings and left the land to solitude, and to the spirits of the jungle

who are ever ready to resume their own.

The river-banks closed in about us, serried masses of vegetation clinging to the hill-sides which dipped to the water's edge. The forest was dense but mean; no single giant tree lifted its crest skyward; on every hand there was nothing but scrub, half-grown saplings, wastes of rank grass, little patches of bare, red earth, marking a landslip, a tiny clearing or two nicked out of the crush of bushes, and then more hills, more scrub, and more secondary jungle. The scene told its own tale of desolation. The virgin forest had been felled, every inch of the land had been cultivated, and abandoned foot by foot to the slow-creeping jungle. Those hill-sides, we knew, were filled with the memory of ancient tragedies, records of wrong and oppression, of murder and ruthless robbery; and Nature was even now slowly covering from sight the scenes of so much wickedness. I fancied, as I gazed upon the unsightly hills, that I could mark the struggle between the patient toil and endurance of the Chinese settlers,—the most bovine and long-suffering of our kind—with their narrow eyes fixed resolutely on the distant wealth they hoped at last to garner, and the avarice and cruelty of a degenerate race of kings whose one desire was to live for the moment, taking no thought for the future or of the deluge which their folly was precipitating. Those scrub-set slopes represented a page of obscure history which will never be written; a few lines on the long, long scroll which tells of the endless war between good and evil. As the yacht flew past, to me the memory of that record was a thing very real. The shores were peopled for me with ghosts, the ghosts of dead endeavour, dead hopes, cruel disappointments, grievous wrong; and

the spirits of the patient dead seemed to mop and mow at me from the river's banks. Surely 'tis only in the East that a man may look upon a land wasted as is this, may see its tragic history written plainly on its face, may realise the human suffering which it records, and yet may know that the deeds which wrought its ruin called forth no flood of execration, and passed unnoticed as the common facts of life.

A bend in the river, the banks still telling their tale of desolation, and the town of Brunei lay sprawling upon the surface of the stream. Dust-coloured roofs of palm-leaf thatch of all shapes, sizes, heights, slopes, and degrees of crookedness, set at all angles, staggering in all directions, with a thin haze, the smoke of many cooking-fires, hovering above them like a faint mist,—such was our first view of the greatest native city in Borneo. The yacht forged ahead, cleaving the brown waters into even waves which turned to tawny yellow as the sunlight smote them; behind us the wake showed in a slim triangle flecked with foam and swirling eddies; then Brunei opened its ragged jaws and swallowed us up. To the right and left the same barren, green hills dipped to the river, empty shores, steep and inhospitable, upon which no human dwelling held its foothold. In the river itself, narrowing the fairway, the clusters of huts which formed the town tottered upon rickety legs whose feet were in the mud of the bed.

"Queer folk, aren't they?" said one of our number. "It looks about the last place in the world that a sane man would have hit upon as a suitable site for a town."

Seen as a whole Brunei seemed to sit upon the river's face like some vast patch of dust-coloured weed. In detail it was composed of a perfect

maze of narrow waterways hedged about only by the *nibong* piles, set apart at irregular intervals, upon which the crazy verandahs and huts tottered uneasily. In each of these lanes boats rode moored to ladders by rattan painters; on either hand rose buildings fashioned of wood, bark, or palm-leaf, inexpressibly squalid, dirty, irregular, and picturesque. Here and there a long verandah, canted at a reckless angle, threatened to tip its crowd of human beings into the stagnant water below its uneven flooring; a ladder, lacking most of its rungs, led to a dark doorway, the only air-hole of a filthy interior; roofs rose to low elevations in serried jumbles; floors showed wide gaps which no man sought to repair; rubbish floated horribly upon the river's face; decay peeped from every corner, was visible on every side, made itself manifest in broken rails, rotting beams, thatch that hung limply from ragged eaves, boats broken and unseaworthy, torn nets, floating pieces of mats, broached baskets, and the discarded flotsam and jetsam of several thousand households. Yet the place was crammed with life. As the yacht passed men, women, and children thronged out of every hut, crowded every verandah, climbed over one another on rickety causeways, jostled and shouldered on unsteady stagings. Faces peeped from narrow slits of window, budded forth from the gloom of doors, peered at the vessel from under the arms and legs, or from above the bare brown shoulders of the crowd. On every hand children were seen in clusters, all seemingly of about the same age. One might be tempted to believe that there had been a heavy harvest of children garnered some six years ago, and that none had been needed since, were it not that half the women in the crowds

of on-lookers suckled little squirming things with the open motherliness of the East.

From a pack of huddled huts upon our right, places as squalid and mean as their fellows, bearing like them their dingy marks of decay and rottenness, suddenly three calico flags sprang skywards to flutter at the tops of squat staffs. The yellow one in the centre marked the palace of the Sultan (*Ichabod, Ichabod!* It were cruel to laugh!); the black one on the left was the badge of the Bendahara, the principal chief, and the most evil of the King's many evil councillors; the other, which had once been white ('tis a colour that Brunei seemingly abhors, and will not long suffer to maintain its pristine purity), served to indicate the dwelling of the Pangeran Pemancha, a third chief of reputation no better than the colour of his bunting.

We looked around us mournfully: at the bare hills which bore stunted growths of sparse jungle, with one of their number here and there more thinly clothed in grass through which the red soil showed like a suggestion of pink flesh beneath a transparent veil of gauze; at the squalid clusters of unsightly huts; at the crazy buildings in which the corpse of departed state and greatness lay festering under the stained squares of bunting; at the ruin and the desolation, the filth and the decay; the shattered ugliness, the picturesqueness that in itself seemed to stand as a sure sign of degradation from higher things. The words of the old chroniclers, those swarthy Portuguese adventurers who sailed of old time so bravely into the Unknown, came to my memory, the tales they had to tell of that mighty Malayan kingdom upon which they chanced suddenly, after many weary days spent in wandering among the uninhabited or sparsely peopled

islands of these Eastern seas ; and the miserable wreck before us made those words a mockery, a refinement of cruelty, like a merciless taunt thrown in the teeth of one dying in misery and utter abjectness. Was it credible that what is now a mere huddle of dilapidated hovels was of old time a city, so imposing and magnificent that it filled the stout souls of even those hard-bit filibusters with awe and wonder ? Was it possible that they should willingly have squatted on the floor in the presence of the Emperor (they loved high-sounding titles, did those *grandeos* of the open sea), doing obeisance to his majesty after the humble native fashion, nor felt that their action was an abasement of their race, a degradation to the colour of their skins ? As I looked upon the shattered remnant of the Brunei of their day, it seemed impossible that such things should ever have been ; yet, if men spake truly, the marvel of that new-found land was sufficient when at its zenith to command their ready homage. Now, long since, the gorgeous palaces have crumbled into ruin, the ruins themselves have melted into dust, the passing wind, the flowing waters have scattered even the *debris* to the hungry sea ; and to-day we behold, not Brunei, the land of ancient story, but its shrivelled mummy and the grey ashes of its empire. The old, strong race of fierce kings has passed away with the palaces in which they dwelt. The puny sons of that once mighty breed, the men who wield so feeble a sway in our time, are the mere lees left in the cup which held so potent a draught of kingly blood.

And yet these changes have not been wrought by disastrous war, by famine, or by pestilence. They have come about gradually, and by the twin action of time and of decay ;

they are the result of vice, consistent avarice, short-sighted folly that bartered its birth-right willingly for every proffered dish of savoury taste, and the degeneration consequent upon centuries of self-indulgence, lack of self-restraint, and loss of self-respect. Personal pleasure has been the fetish of king after king. To glut the maw of this idol all things have been ruthlessly sacrificed. Fragment by fragment the vast territory, which was once the thrall of Brunei, has been bartered for shining dollars to the pale-skinned folk who once came so humbly into the royal presence ; river by river the land has passed away from the hands which could not hold it in their feeble grip ; till at last the Rajah of Sarawak annexed Limbang, which is the *hinterland* of the ancient kingdom itself, diverted the last thin trickle of trade to his own neat station, and "broke the rice-pot of the king." Then, when it was too late for action, the horror of his loss was made manifest to the Sultan, and he whined and prayed, and wrung his hands in his impotence, weeping like a woman, and no man heeded. Thus empire and territory, power and magnificence have vanished, and all that remains is an old, dull-witted man sitting amid the ruins of his town, seeking vainly the pleasures which he can no longer enjoy, and breeding idiots who represent in their hideous persons the accumulated vice and degradation of centuries.

A messenger from the palace brought me word that the Sultan was awaiting me in his hall of state.

"Thy Friend saith," quoth the messenger, "that his heart is very glad because of thy coming. Had thy arrival been delayed, thy Friend would certainly have departed this day from Brunei in order that he might seek thee in Labuan, and all

things have been made ready in preparation for his journey."

"Cut the throat of a fowl with a knife, and the throat of a man with sweet words," I said, quoting the vernacular proverb. "The Sultan had no intention of leaving Brunei, is it not so?"

"True, *Tuan*," answered the messenger.

I knew that the Sultan did not dare leave his shrunken kingdom even for a few days, lest on his return he should find that his throne had been wrested from him by some faction of his intriguing court. I was aware that, with this fear in his eyes, he had not summoned courage to risk stirring from within the narrow limits of his palace for nearly a dozen years. The fact was notorious; I knew it, the King knew that I knew, and the herald also was quite abreast of the situation. None the less, the conventional falsehood tripped glibly from the latter's lips, and only the faintest flicker of a smile played about his features when the inevitable detection exposed the emptiness of the royal message.

The gig was brought alongside, and our party rowed ashore—no, not ashore, for there is no such thing at Brunei; we rowed to the lop-sided ladder, toothless with age, which leads to the long causeway giving access to the hall of state. Above our heads, as we looked upward at the *nibong* stagings, brass swivel-guns grinned at us from unexpected corners. Some, with muzzles fashioned like the heads of dragons or of gnomes, glared at us through hideous eyes under tangles of metal mane, their fierce jaws agape; others of more conventional pattern, thrust sullen noses out of gloomy patches of shadow; others again lolled on clumsy wooden carriages at the end of a crazy pier, with a dozen men fumbling about them

making ready for the customary salute. With some difficulty and with little grace of attitude we clambered up the unsteady ladder, and stepping warily over yawning abysses of broken flooring, beneath which black and slimy mud-banks were visible, we picked our way towards the presence-chamber.

"It is just as well that the royal *levées* are not largely attended," said one of the company, "or the whole thing would resolve itself in a gigantic mudlark, and the loyal populace would be floundering about down below there like 'poor old Jack in the water' at the end of Brighton pier."

The perilous causeway ended in a mean building with a patched roof of corrugated iron. It consisted of a single oblong room, measuring some forty feet by twenty, broken up by a double row of pillars running parallel to one another down its entire length. At the far end there was a tawdry throne, like a dilapidated sedan-chair, covered with tarnished tinsel and garish paper soiled and torn. Behind the throne a narrow curtained doorway led into the interior of the palace; the remaining three sides of the room were open to the air save for a low balustrade some two and a half feet high. Over the end of this which adjoined the causeway we scrambled, and a fat, pale-faced man, who somehow gave one the impression of complete sexlessness, waddled forward to greet us. He wore a cotton kerchief on his shaven poll, a flowing coat of white embroidered with tiny gold stars, a high yellow silk waistcoat, a huddle of silk cloths about his waist, and long silk trousers extending to his splay sandalled feet. The clasp of his hand was nerveless and slack; his skin was sodden to the touch like a fish that has been too long out of the water. His face was broad and shapeless, hanging in flabby

folds, creased and wrinkled by time, weakness, and vice. Having shaken hands with each one of us in turn he waddled back up the room, and subsided in a limp heap on to a chair which stood a little way to the left of the throne. This was the last and feeblest of Brunei's kings.

The place was crammed with tables, like an auctioneer's show-room. On the left hand stood a row of chairs which were presently occupied by a crowd of dingy royalties; on the right were other chairs set ready for our accommodation. A tattered carpet was underfoot; a soiled linen ceiling-cloth hung low above us as a tent; the whole place, with its upright pillars and its flutter of sodden curtains, resembled a large, old-fashioned four-post bedstead. The ragged officials of the palace squatted in knots on the floor around us.

A native sauntered in and set a vast candle down in front of me; another handed round a tray on which cigarettes, a foot long, rolled in yellow palm-leaves lay partly concealed under a grimy cloth; we lighted them, and fired slow compliments at one another like minute guns, between the irregular detonations of the swivels at the pier-head. Then men brought, in cheap Birmingham cups, coffee that was apparently compounded of *eau sucrée* discoloured by gritty ink. We solemnly put it to our lips, but the experience was one that might not lightly be repeated. Then the talk rose in feeble flutters, like the flight of a bird with a broken wing, rose to fall again, lost in a despondent silence. One little effort was made by the King to maintain some shreds of his former state,—the state that had belonged to his forebears, but had vanished long ere his own day dawned. In ancient times the majesty of the Sultan did not permit him to address mere strangers directly. His golden

words filtered to common ears through the medium of interpreters. Once or twice, listlessly, the King turned to a squatting creature near my chair and bade him tell me this, that, or the other commonplace; but when I refused to await the slow interpretation and answered direct, using the rounded phrases dear to Malayan custom, he cast away even this poor pretence of aloofness from the rank and file of humanity, and entered into conversation with me forgetful of ancient forms.

Presently, the complimentary period of our interview having sobbed itself to death, the talk passed to business, but of that I need say nothing. It was not begun by me, for my visit had no ulterior motive lying behind it, and the matters discussed were of no importance. None the less the talk enabled me to see something of the utter mental destitution of the rulers of Brunei, of the feeble thoughts, the greed, the vacillation, the total lack of self-confidence which has wrought the ruin of the land. It was an ugly glimpse of things unsightly, and I pass it over as quickly as I may.

At last I rose to go, but at the request of the King our party started on a sort of hurdle-race over balustrades and low walls, severed each from each by rickety bridges, until at last we found ourselves in a tiny room somewhere at the back of the palace. A candle of immense proportions was set at my side, an honour with which I could well have dispensed, for the room measured not more than eight feet square, and the only doors were blocked by packs of staring natives. After an interval the Sultan's eldest son lurched through the crowd, seized my hand, and seated himself almost in my pocket. One glance at that bullet head, that retreating forehead, those foolish goggle

eyes, restless and leering, those mouth-
ing blubber lips, was enough to brand
the creature for the loathsome thing
he was. This degenerate son of a
once mighty breed, this poor grimac-
ing idiot, babbling follies, was the
fruit, over-ripe with decay, of the
self-indulgence and the vile ill-doing
of generation after generation of men
who had recognised no law of God or
man save that of unchained inclina-
tion. He stood before us, the awful
moral pointed by Nature at those
who dare to sin against her will ; in
him, the epitome of his race, the
utter degradation of erstwhile imperial
Brunei was typified. He represented
the dotting of the last *t*'s, the cross-
ing of the last *t*'s in the death-scroll
which was spread so broadly for our
inspection.

Even at rest and at a distance this
poor victim of others' guilt had been
a thing horrible and revolting ; but
here, close at hand in the insufferable
atmosphere of the room, seated almost
on the chair I occupied, with his
hideous face leering into mine, and
his twitching hands and restless body
instinct with a disgusting eagerness,
he was a sight to make you catch
your breath, to set you wrestling with
a sensation of physical nausea, to
inspire a violent desire to destroy a
creature whose very existence seemed,
for the moment, to make the whole
earth filthy. And all this time the
wretch was gibbering and grimacing,
writhing and squirming, possessed by
a perfect passion of eagerness. Over
and over again he repeated breath-
lessly the same muddled formula,
drumming on the table with his
fingers to emphasise his meaning,
screaming his request aloud so that
his voice trailed off into shrill falsetto
and broke discordantly. He had
inherited, together with other things,
his forebears' love of money, and for
money he now alternately wailed and

stormed. His eyes were alive with
the lust of gold ; he seemed possessed
by a devil of avarice ; he sweated and
trembled, stammered and raved in a
frenzy of desire. In a breath he was
arrogant and overbearing, abject and
cringing, furious and piteous. Money,
money, money,—it was the one pas-
sion that the thieving years had left
intact in the heart of Brunei's rulers,
and this miserable idiot, whose very
soul was laid naked to our sight since
he lacked the wit to conceal what
others hid more cunningly, was the
spokesman of his fallen race. It was
love of money that had driven the
plundered Chinese from their thriving
spice-gardens ; it was the love of
money that had tempted successive
kings to part with their land inch
by inch, till all save a few square
miles lay in the grip of strangers ;
it was the love of money that had
reduced this empire to a mere mass
of charred cinders ; and the love of
money now voiced itself in the
strident screams of this poor wreck
of Brunei's manhood.

From behind a curtain in the dim
background I caught the glint of
women's eyes surmounting a sugges-
tion of bright silks and gaudy jewelry,
the eyes of Malay women, the most
venal of their sex. That was the
one touch needed to make plain the
origin of Brunei's fall. The Daughters
of the Horse-Leech, crying "Give!"
had hounded the men-folk to the
quest of gold, gold at any price, so
be it that the whims and extrava-
gances of the moment's favourite
might be gratified. That suspicion
of bright eyes and dainty draperies
supplied the one needed commentary
to the text which we had studied with
such a strange blending of pity and
contempt.

More coffee was brought, more
gigantic cigarettes, more candles, and
the gibbering of the idiot never

ceased. As soon as possible we tore ourselves away from the indecent spectacle, scrambled back into the hall, where the King and his nobles still sat in state, and made our adieux. We regained the yacht after grounding on many evil-smelling mud-banks, and dropped down the river for a little distance in search of cleaner air. Hosts of tiny dug-outs pursued us, loaded with brass-ware carefully pickled in brine to give it an appearance of age, with hideous hairy weapons from the interior, with gaudy cloths ostensibly of native manufacture and of obvious Chinese origin. The people of Brunei have lost their ancient arts together with their ancient greatness.

The ebb held us prisoners, and we could not quit the river till the dawn was yellow in the east. I took no part in the haggling for worthless gear, but lay on deck far into the night and gazed at the mean clusters of hovels squatting on the river's bosom half a mile up-stream. A couple of small fishing-smacks dawdled past, the paddles splashing rhythmically, the steersman raising a thin

song, and the rowers taking up the refrain listlessly. These boats represented the last remnant of the vast fleets which in olden days put out to sea fearlessly for a three years' cruise to terrorise the China Sea. The moaning of the boat-song, with its plaintive refrain pitched in a heart-broken minor key, sounded in my ears like a dirge chanted in memory of the dead past. Over the town the lights flickered out one by one, and night shut down upon the squalor and the misery. As the moon rose and cast shimmering lights upon the waters of the river, a low bank of mist, white as snow and soft as floss, hovered above the town. As I watched, it crept downwards, gently, tenderly, covering all things, till nothing save the whitened waters running towards me from beneath its fallen hem was visible. Brunei, draped in those soft folds, had vanished utterly. It seemed as though the kind hand of Nature had drawn the death-cloth over the face of that poor corpse of empire.

HUGH CLIFFORD.

THE DEVONS.

"THAT's what the Colonel zaid: 'Your vather he wer' the best zoldier in the hergment' he said. 'Don't 'e be a vule, Tom! If Lizzie there's worth thy havin', she'll wait var 'e,' zaid the Colonel."

The brown-eyed girl slid her hand into Tom Pester's. "Aye, lad, I'll wait var 'e, zure," she said, in her soft Devon speech.

"Thou'lt make a vine vitty zoldier, Tom," said his mother, the third of the little group in the kitchen of a Devonshire cottage, which had the breath of gorse and sweet-brier blowing in through the open window. "Thee b'aint zo tarl as Bill, belike, but there's plenty to 'ee, and thou'rt smart and clane as Sergeant Pester's zon should be. Thy vather he meant 'ee var the Army, lad, thee and Bill. They was his words when he lay a-dyin' when the wound as that there heathen spear give him bruk out. If Lizzie there goes agen the wish of thy vather, she b'aint the wench I allays tuk her to be."

"Nay I'll not hurn agen his wishes, nor thine, Mother. Tom's not but nineteen, and I'm bare eighteen. When he's done his zeven's, time enough to think of marr'in'. I'll wait var 'e up to the Colonel's, Tom, and have a piece of money zaved, tu, by the time thee coomes agen."

"But how'll you du, Mother dear?"

"Don't 'e vret var I, dear lad," said his mother, who was barely fifty, and comely yet. "I be strang, and there be washin' up to the Harl; besides, Bill be coomin' home zoon."

So was Tom bidden God-speed to Exeter Barracks as became the son

of Sergeant Pester, who had died of a wound from a Dervish spear, gotten when the square was broken at Tamai, and to the satisfaction of the Colonel, of whom one and all of his successors in the command of the old 11th said that he was the best recruiting-sergeant the regiment had ever had. Tom's pride was in the bones of him, bred there or ever he opened his eyes on the world, and his mother and the Colonel had taught him what discipline meant. Eighteen months later, when he came to say good-bye to his mother and sweet-heart on the eve of his departure for India (it was September, 1898), his arm bore the marksman's badge and the stripe of a lance-corporal.

"Good-bye, Tom, my lad," said the old Colonel, pump-handling away with his right arm. "Keep away from the drink and the women,—but I needn't say that to you; be clean and willing, and you'll make the soldier you ought to be by your blood. I'm prisoner's guard over Lizzie. No chit of a girl shall play fast and loose with a lad of the old 11th while I'm above ground. She's proud of your red coat, I'll warrant. No dam' fool shall look down on the soldier in this village while I'm above ground. I've written to Major Power,—Bill's his servant, you know,—and he'll keep an eye on you. Good-bye, my lad, God bless you."

Thus Tom departed, to embark with his draft on board the *DUNERA*, bearing with him a tress of Lizzie's brown hair worked into a housewife by her own hands, and a silver ring in which stood out in relief the word *Mizpah*.

In the Canal they passed the DILWARA homeward-bound, carrying, as they knew, the time-expired draft of their own regiment. The men clustered to the bulwarks as the great ships worked slowly past each other, chaff and greetings flying between the decks. Tom's eye searched the line till they fell on the figure of a corporal, nigh the stature of John Ridd, who wore his helmet hind-side before, and disposed his arms so that the stripes were plainly displayed.

"Hullo, Bill!" shouted Tom.

"Hullo, Tom!" replied the Corporal. "How's Mother an' Lizzie? I be goin' home to look arter she var 'ee."

"Don't thee get tryin' any o' thy games there, or thee'll git they girt ugly ears o' thine barked," shouted Tom in reply, grinning.

"Who's that there kid, Pester?" asked a comrade.

"My own little brother, a good lad. He's left his maid to home. I'm goin' to look arter her."

"Lard! I'm glad it ain't mine you be goin' to chappy-rone, you Don Lothair-i-o."

Bill spat overboard scientifically. "I'll knock thy calf's head off thy shoulders if thee gives I any o' thy lip, Garge Chiles," he said. "'Tis my brother's girl, and the mother's milk's between us." But, nevertheless, he ran his fingers conceitedly through his hair, as what Adonis of five-and-twenty would not, on hearing himself dubbed irresistible?

Thus Bill went home to be received with open arms by the Colonel, who must have him up to the Hall of an evening that he might hear all about the regiment. Also he found Bill a place about the house, to look after the electric-light engine. The mother gazed on the sturdy, erect figure of her first-born, and felt her soul satisfied within her, while Lizzie Ireland

regarded him with something of awe as the biggest, handsomest, most travelled man she had ever seen, and with something of affection as Tom's brother. Poor Tom! He seemed silent and oafish, compared with this easy man of experience, with his stories of strange cities and heathen men. Dear Tom, he would come back even as Bill was; not so big of course, and not *quite* so handsome, but,—well, in the meantime, here was Bill.

No, she meant no wrong to Tom, but here was Bill, and certainly Bill meant no wrong. So he went and took up with that flaunting hussy, Dorcas Hewlett. Lizzie watched them sweethearting in the lanes, and passed them with her head held rather high. She was so short with Bill if the latter came in (as he generally contrived to do) when she was visiting Mrs. Pester, that the latter took occasion to protest, with tears in her voice.

"Never mind 'bout me and Bill, Mother," the girl replied tartly. "'Tis Tom's place to look arter I, and I don't want no one's else's vine words. Bill can keep 'em var them as likes 'em. There be plenty o' they, I dessay."

Bill grinned with provocative self-satisfaction, and the girl arose and left the cottage, without a word, in a fury.

"My sakes!" said the mother in amazement. "Go you arter her, Bill, and zee what ails her. Whatever'll Tom zay if she do be to get vretty?"

Bill was out of the cottage before the words had left her lips, and, looking over the garden-gate, saw Lizzie seated by the road-side, her head in her hands. In a moment he was beside her, and she rose to face him, her eyes wet but flaming.

"Why, little zister, whatever be come to 'ee?" he said, passing his arm round her waist and bending down to

kiss her. He had long ago claimed, and been allowed, a brother's privilege, but his reward now was a swinging box on the ear.

"Keep thy var Darcas," she panted, and, turning, ran from him at the top of her pace.

Bill fingered his ear in mute dismay. Through the singing left by the blow he heard Tom's voice saying: "Don't 'ee try any o' thy games there, or thee'll get thy girt ugly ears o' thine barked." He hadn't tried any games, he told himself, but he had had his ears boxed all the same.

Gradually comprehension soaked into his numskull. His thoughts came slowly, but seven years of experience were not thrown away upon him. His smile grew more self-complacent than before. "Jealous," he said as he slowly unfastened the garden-gate, and sat down on a bench to think. The thought tickled his vanity, and vanity is more shameless than Pandarus of Troy. "Jealous," he said again twenty minutes later, when he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and went indoors.

Lizzie kept away from Mrs. Pester's cottage during the whole winter. When she met Bill and Dorcas in the lanes, as would happen from time to time, she passed them with her head held high. Poor Lizzie was very elementary.

But in April the mother fretted herself ill. Tom's letters were full of complaints that "Liz seemed changed zomewise," and the simple mind brooded over the girl's absence in vain. She faded before the winds of March, till at length Bill sought Lizzie at the Hall, and told her his opinion that his mother would die unless her mind had rest.

Lizzie's conscience pricked her horribly, and that evening she spent at the cottage. Bill kept out of the way,—at the Beetle and Wedge unfortu-

nately, which was no habit of his. He came up the garden-path a little unsteadily as Lizzie opened the door to depart.

"Goin', Liz?" he said. "I'll come with 'ee to zee as 'ee don't git hurned away wi'. Many a chap'd be glad, I'm thinkin'."

"Thee'll do nought of the kind," snapped the girl. "I asks none o' thy company."

"Nonsense, Liz," said Mrs. Pester's voice from within, a little thin and querulous. "Thee'll not keep up this voolishness. Let thy brother zee 'ee to home, as is respectable."

"Do'ee hear, maid?" said Bill, glancing humorously at her angry face. "I be to coome wi' 'ee."

Liz made no further protest, but moved off, Bill by her side.

They walked on thus in silence till they came to a stile at the edge of a copse through which the path ran. Bill vaulted over first, and extended his hand to Lizzie. She angrily refused it, and straightway, catching her foot in her skirt, tumbled headlong into his arms. The laughing devil of mischief who besets the footsteps of the light-minded entered into Bill. He pressed her close to his breast, and kissed her on the lips.

"Oh Bill, leave me be! For the dear Lord's sake, leave me be!" said Lizzie with a sob, yet not escaping from his arm. Then Bill knew what he had only guessed before. He cast all to the winds, as passion reinforced the fumes of drink in his brain. He drew her closely against himself. "I'll never leave thee, Liz," he whispered thickly, "till thee tells me which it be,—me or Tom."

"Coward,—thee knows!" she sobbed, leaning on his shoulder as she felt the knees beneath her give way. "Oh, Bill, thy own brother!"

"I know zure 'nough, var I love 'ee, love 'ee, love 'ee," he replied,

"and not a man, brother or no brother, shall take thee vram me. Tell the truth, Liz—thee'st boun' to be mine!"

"Good Gard forgive us, I be bound!"

Then she flung her arms round his neck, seeking his lips with her own, abandoned to joy and despair.

"I be mendin' vast, Bill," said his mother, when he entered the cottage. "Liz has given me life again. It'll be vine news var Tom."

"Aye, Mother," Bill assented, with conscious irony, "vine news var Tom."

In due course Tom received his fine news; and he pondered over it without replying, until a day when a certain order reached his regiment, which set the hearts of all men beating. Before he left India he sat down and wrote: "I'll not becall 'ee, and I cannot zay this comes hoping. Tis zuthin var I to have loved 'ee true. I've lived zoher and clean var thy zake, and zaved a bit var mother; 'tis with our Culler-Sarjent. Tis like enough the Boars will kill me, but I'm vit to vight, and vit, I trust the Lord, to die. Mayhap Bill won't mind your thinkin' of me among the barenits, he zitting snug at home. Your late Tom."

Bill read the letter, and his face grew grave as he handed it back to the girl. "Mayhap Bill won't zit snug at home, Liz," he said. "I dursn't tell 'ee till I knowed, but it's got to be told now."

"What do 'ee mean, Bill?" said Lizzie frightened.

"The 'zerve's warned for service, my girl. I've got to go."

"Bill, Bill, you can't go," wailed the girl, throwing herself into his arms, "not and leave me like this! Don't 'ee guess how 'tis with me, my dear, dear man?"

"Liz! Do you mean—?"

She nodded, looking up into his face, with eyes frightened yet trusting.

"There's time yet, Liz," said her lover. "We'll be carled virst o' Zunday next."

"Not here, Bill! Oh think of the shame of it!"

"Tis too late to think, Liz; we've ate the zweet apples, and we've got to zwallow the zour, I reckon. Here it must be; there ain't no time to go a-field. Face it out wi' me, my wife."

To one man alone in General Buller's army the thought of Lady-smith relieved brought not unmixed joy. Bill Pester feared not the bullets which rained from the Tugela trenches and from the frowning *schantzes* on the hills above. Not one of all the thousand hard-bitten men of Devon walked more unconcernedly into the jaws of death than he. But victory meant the meeting with Tom, at the thought of which his spirit quailed. No British army lay beneath smoke-wreathed Bulwana. There was only Tom,—Tom, eating his heart out (there being little else to eat) with rage, and shame and grief,—Tom whom he had come six thousand miles to save,—Tom whom the cur within him wished dead.

"May be Tom's gone out. 'Tis best so!" That thought first came to him as he walked back slowly and with head erect from the bullet-swept glacis of Colenso, when the army, cursing and raging, obeyed the order of recall.

He thought as the nickel storm of the Mausers swept by his head, and he waited for the one which was meant for him, of how Tom would come to Heaven's gate to meet him. Yes, but Tom was fit to die. He, Bill, had the curse of Cain on him,

and would go to Hell. The thought lashed him to fury. He turned round, and, dropping on his knee with a yell, began to empty his magazine in the enemy's direction. His section halted at his yell, and half turned round.

"Come on, Pester, you damned fool," said his captain's voice behind him; "come on, or by God I'll court-martial you!"

The words recalled him to himself, and, with a curse, he followed the regiment. His captain died that day; he was untouched.

But the thought of Tom lying dead grew ever more and more familiar:—"Mayhap Tom's gone out; happiest for him, poor lad!" Such was the formula in which his thoughts ran. The words rang in his ears through the gloom of the black night when the Devons covered the retreat from Spion Kop. They were howled by the shell and hissed by the Mauser bullets as he lay on the kopje of Vaal Krantz: they were beaten into his brain by the rhythm of the regiment's footsteps as the army coiled its way back again to Chieveley Camp; and he cursed himself ever more bitterly for the thought which would not be stifled.

But he knew his keenest agony on January 6th. He stood all through that day, being off duty, out with the furthest picquets, listening to the surf of fire as it rose and fell, beating against the eternal hills of British constancy. How the cruel fear for his brother possessed him when the din of conflict rose, and the yet more cruel hope racked him as it died away!

The news reached the relieving army at last that Ladysmith was safe. The camp of the Devons hummed with pride that day. Each bronzed face wore its broadest grin as one told another: "Our lads saved

it! 'Twas their charge sent the Boers to Hell."

On the evening of February 23rd Bill Pester, promoted sergeant for gallantry in action, lay on the top of Monte Christo Hill, reading a letter from his wife. "Dere Bill," it ran, "this comes hoping you are well which it leaves me as well as can be expected. She's a rele buty Bil, and we sends our love to Dady. I had it putt in the Cashulty lists Bill which I sends, as seeins beleavin. There she is in print bless her little hart.—The wife of Corpril William Pester of the Devonshire Regament so no more at present, From your sincear but happy wife, Mrs. William Pester."

Bill rolled over on to his back, and, putting his two hands under his head, gazed up at the one bright star which burned through the tree tops. He heard as in a dream the laughter and chaff of his mates as they hauled on the drag-ropes of the fifteen-pounders, or hoisted the blue-nosed shrapnel up the slopes of Monte Christo. They grinned at him and passed by. "Bill's got the pip to-night," said they. "Let him be. He's done his bit vine!" for he was popular with men as with officers.

But it was not the pip. It was only the joy of fatherhood, mingled with mortal dread that next day would close his eyes ere they had seen his baby; and, behind all, the thought of the meeting which victory must bring. If he met Tom, Tom must know, and how would he take it? May be Tom had gone out, may be,—and so back again on the treadmill round of thought till the star began to pale, and the colour-sergeant's whisper sounded a cautious reveille.

The day brought a confused fight. Bill lay flat behind a stone just big enough, so it seemed to him, to hide his helmet. His hands were blistered with the red-hot rifle-barrel, and the

Mauser bullets streamed overhead, glistening like telegraph-wires in the sunlight. After that came a day's truce, and one more weary tramp back over the Tugela, while the remnant of the dogged Irish brigade clung to the slopes of Hart's Hill. Through those long, weary hours Bill was sleepless and indefatigable, and sleepless he lay during the night before the last assault. Two officers passed by the spot where he lay. "If we were a Scotch regiment, I should say that Corporal Pester was 'fey,'" said one of them. "He's a splendid section-leader, and I never saw a man so cool in action, but he moves as if he were in a dream."

"He's got a brother in Ladysmith in our First," replied the other, "and he wants to relieve the town off his own bat. They're devoted to each other, and both of them splendid soldiers. Their mother rents a cottage on my uncle's estate."

They passed on, leaving Bill writhing. He had a brother in Ladysmith, had he? Perhaps he had no brother. He hoped to God he had not! They were devoted to one another, and he had ruined his brother's life! Decidedly it were best,—but there was another alternative. What a fool he had been not to think of it before! Yet what good to Tom? There occurred to him words which he had read when the sermon seemed dry, and he dare not sleep for fear the parish-clerk should knock his head: "A man may not marry his brother's wife," so they ran, "nor his ox, nor his ass—" no, that came from somewhere else—from the place where it said "Thou shalt not commit—" Tom had not sinned, why should he die? He, Bill, had sinned, and "the soul that sinneth it shall die." There was every chance. To-morrow that kopje in front of them had to be stormed, and they would

be the stormers, if the position of to-night went for anything. Death awaited him. Of course it did: "The wages of sin is death!" He had earned his wages; the thought soothed him, and he slept. But with the light came the news that Hildyard's brigade was held in reserve. Wynne's Lancashire men and Barton's Fusiliers were picked out for the glorious peril, with Hart's heroic Irishmen in support on the left flank, clinging to the hill-side they had won.

Bill went white to the lips, and fell in with a curse. "We'll be beat again," he said; "back again across that damned river!"

The booming of the great naval guns and the bark of the fifteen-pounders tore his brain, till the concussion became acute pain. He lay with his comrades, all straining their eyes to watch the little brown specks on the slope opposite. Checked! the thunder of the guns became louder than ever. Bill stood up in his excitement and waved his rifle. "They won't do it!" he shouted. "They want me; they want men as wants to be killed!" But his voice was drowned in the din.

Suddenly the guns ceased firing, and for the first time a crackle of rifle-fire made itself heard to the watchers on Monte Christo. The brown specks had become a broad band of brown. Then the band seemed to unroll itself like a coil of ribbon, leaving the earth behind it brown. God, they're in! A tiny sparkle of bayonets on the opposite ridge seen through the green lyddite haze, and then the line disappeared from view, proclaiming its existence, however, by the crashing volleys flung after the retreating Boers. Hildyard's brigade sprang to their feet with an exultant roar, and as it died away the order came to move. The waiting brigades filed over the Tugela, and up

to their comrades' side on the murderous hill.

Bill, sound and hale, looked over the tin roofs of Ladysmith. "Alive!" he muttered,—*"wish to God I were dead!"* But the Boers were in wild rout at Elandslaagte station, and Dundonald was that evening in the streets of Ladysmith.

Next day the brigades marched in. They tramped with heads erect, silent, dirty, ragged, but ruddy with health between ranks of silent ghosts. It was the strangest triumph in which victorious troops ever took part. The Second Devons strode by the attenuated ranks of their first battalion, an occasional shout greeting one or another mate in the ranks of either. Bill marched stiffly erect, eyes front; but that did not prevent him from seeing a wasted Tom staring at him with big eyes. Bill felt very hot. Both brothers were alive and in Ladysmith; the meeting could not be long delayed.

The battalions were dismissed opposite the Town Hall. There was noise enough now, as the men sought their friends with tongues unloosed. Bill stood digging the toe of his boot into the ground, not knowing which way to turn.

"Ah, Pester, how are you?" said a voice behind him. "Seen your brother? He's a bit bowled over by fever, but he's about." It was the Major who had been his master, and was now Tom's.

"Ess, zur, I zeed 'un," answered Bill; "but he don't zim to be here. Beg pardon, zur, I hope you're well, zur."

"Oh, I'm all right, thank you, Pester, a bit underfed of course, but sound. You'll find Tom down the road, I believe. He's a good soldier,

as good as you; he led the half company on January 6th, after Mr. Seaton was killed. Go and find him; he'll be dying to see you. I often talk to him of you."

Bill saluted, and moved off slowly. What did Tom say when the Major talked of him? He would have given worlds to ask the question. "Oh, damn it! I'd best get it over," he muttered. "Us is bound to meet zome day."

Tom was sitting by the road-side, his head in his hands. Bill's sunburned face took a deeper shade as he halted before him, turned right, and stood at attention. "Hullo, Tom," was all he could find to say after a choking silence.

Tom looked up. "Hullo, Bill," he said, and the silence closed down again. Bill felt the blood drumming in his carotids; there was a sensation in his scalp like pins and needles.

"How's she?" Tom said at last, abruptly.

For answer Bill groped in his pocket and produced first a handful of cartridges, then his housewife, and finally a crumpled letter. "Read it," he said.

His brother opened the letter, smoothed it out, and read it slowly, twice through.

Bill felt himself shrivelling up in the silence which made strange noises in his ears.

Tom looked up at last, and rose from the ground, his eyes sunken into his head, but with a smile on his lips.

"My Guy, thee'st not bin long!" he said, handing the letter back to his brother. "Come on, I've got a drop of whiskey saved, what the doctor giv me. Us't drink long life to the little 'un."

OUR UNHAPPY LANGUAGE.

GREAT thoughts in a man are like the boiling water in a kettle,—they must out. Either they force a way through his stammering lips as the steam through the quivering lid, in which case they are dissipated at once and all is well; or they emerge hot and furious from his pen, and, like the water from the kettle's spout, create much fuss, much mess, and possibly much pain to persons in the way. There may, of course, be a presiding genius, some good housewife, who directs the effusion aright,—into the teapot for instance; but anyone who has had experience of kettles, or of thinkers of great thoughts, knows that this is rare.

Having to our own surprise won a way through this complicated simile, we will show that it was well for us to do so. A while ago we were in fact ourselves not unlike the kettle. The beginning of a new year always sets us off on the old grievance of the evils of progress and the decay of institutions, and, had we not taken some time wrestling with our initial effort, we might by now be massacring millionaires and wrecking railways,—in ink, of course. Calmness, however, succeeds to strife, as many excellent poets have observed, and it is characteristic of calmness to eschew the more heinous crimes. Not that it is impeccable, far from it; calm though we are, we propose to commit a slight larceny,—also in ink, be it understood. The object, which we covet and hereby annex, belongs, we believe, to a Cambridge orator of witty memory who was a master in the science of the unexpected. In

full conclave this gentleman summed up the state of the universe in one graphic sentence: "The floodgates of anarchy and revolution are marching along hand in hand to the desolation of our hearth and home."

There is virtue in a mixed metaphor, and these gates retain for us many volumes of the Great Unsaid, in fact, all the turgid extravagance which was fortunately prevented by the kettle, and for this we are grateful to them. Here, however, we pause for we would not have it thought that our feeling for them, apart from the slight personal service they have rendered, is other than disapproval. How could we regard them even with toleration, when the path of progress along which they have pursued their wild career is marked at every turn with the clay-cold corpse of some dear old institution that they have trampled under foot? Nothing is safe from them; the House of Lords, Rights of Property and the Bank of England are tottering on their pedestals; we can see the time coming when they will swallow the Liberal Party and the war in South Africa at one fell swoop, and with them our last delusion.

But we wander somewhat, and unless we check ourselves we may become a thought unintelligible. Our present purpose is not to repeat the old laments that have served any time this hundred years. There are newer grievances which seem to call for an airing now and then. Among them is the question of the English language, and what is happening to it. If the courteous reader (the matter affects

him more than us who are merely writers,) will bear with us, we will institute a desultory inquiry into the case of our mother tongue with the view of ascertaining whether the floodgates have reached it yet, and, if so, how much damage they have done.

Not long ago we called on our friend the editor of *THE WEEKLY INFALLIBLE*. He is, of course, a charming man,—for is he not an editor and our friend?—but he has his little eccentricities. Among them may be mentioned his method of dealing with his correspondence. Even in the cause of friendship we could not say that he reads his letters; he tears off the envelopes, casts a hurried glance at the first page, and then either crumples the enclosures up and throws them about the floor, or lays them aside in a basket, presumably for future reference. The floor was deep in rejected addresses on this occasion, but we were not surprised at that, for we know him to be a busy and conscientious editor; our surprise was due to the fact that to our entering eye he appeared to be reading, really reading, a letter. It was indeed true, and he handed it to us with a smile and the words: "It has all the grosser errors, with a few that are less common." We took it and studied it with interest: it ran thus.

DEAR SIR,

Please find enclosed short poems *CONFUSION OF BABYLON* and *MADNESS OF NABUCHODONOSOR*, hoping you will be able to favourably consider same. If suitable, I should be glad of notification when they will be out by. If unable to use same I enclose stamps for return at an early date. I am a large contributor to — and — etc.

Yours faithfully,

P.S. Have no objection to your signing my name or initials if you care to.

"Do you frequently receive letters like this?" we said deferentially as to

a man of wide experience. "Not very often," he answered with the sad wise smile of a scrow only half revealed; "but they are becoming more numerous. I suppose they mistake us for *THE EARLY SHOUT*, but I am always glad to see them; they add a piquancy to the day's work." "We thought," we said with some diffidence, "that you rather approved of a certain unconventionality in writing. Your article on *THE DANGERS OF STYLE* seemed to suggest it." "Yes," he replied; "up to a certain point I don't mind careless writing, but hang it all! a line must be drawn somewhere, and I draw it at business jargon and cacophony."

The opinion of an editor of a reputable journal, whose business it is to furnish the public with reading matter, is worthy of consideration; and seeing that this particular opinion avoids pedantry on the one hand and licence on the other, we cannot do better than take it as expressive of that golden mean which most persons of taste would wish to attain when they write and to find attained when they read.

We will not call this opinion the last word, for that word on any theme of mortal discourse can only be spoken by the last man, but we will venture to call it the opinion of common-sense in regard to style. He who discourses on style is in danger of falling into his own pits, but as we have been so foolish as to employ the word we must perforce attempt a definition of its implication. There is no subject about which people have taken more trouble to be epigrammatic, and most of the writers who have touched on it have summed it up in one sentence. Swift defines it as "proper words in proper places," Lord Chesterfield, as "the dress of thoughts," Schopenhauer, as "the physiognomy of the mind," and Buffon, as "the man." Of these

definitions, Swift's is the best, but it needs elaboration; the others seem incomplete, for dress may be disordered, a physiognomy may be far from beautiful, and a man,—well, a man may be anything. If, however, we combine the four we get something like a complete idea of what style is. We should combine them after this fashion. The secret of style is to say what is to be said in the most readable manner, that is, in the manner best suited to the subject and its treatment, with a due regard to the sight and sound of what is written; to this we must add our Buffon, that wide allowance is to be made for the character of the writer as it shows in his writings, for what is unreadable from one man may be fascinating from another. Many critics reprobate Carlyle's Teutonic style, as wild and uncouth and full of all that is bad in literature. If writers are to be estimated by the Procrustean method, this may be true, but things are fortunately not yet come to such a pass, and we need not appraise Carlyle by any standard but his own. His volcanic writing is, after all, the direct representation of his volcanic character. An attempt to prune and trim it would leave it about as effective as an unloaded cannon, potential in theory perhaps, but powerless in effect.

All that this proves, however, in respect of style is that the genius must be left severely alone; the common man cannot improve even upon his obvious oddities without destroying some inward quality which he is unable to replace. To be sure, this does not always deter him. Every now and then there arises one who calls himself a commentator armed with a scholarly pen and a critical faculty, and some hapless classic receives his earnest attention. The most flagrant example in the world's

history perhaps, is Dr. Richard Bentley's edition of *PARADISE LOST*. Bentley, the famous Master of Trinity, was a great Latin scholar, one of the greatest that England has produced, and many of his textual emendations of Horace and Terence are miracles of critical acumen and ingenuity. Yet he stumbled most wofully when he came to use his powers on an English poet. We will take the two last lines of *PARADISE LOST* and show how Bentley dealt with them, acting in his self-imposed role of editor.

They, hand in hand, with wandering
steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

In the first place, Bentley suggested that *they* is a printer's error for *then*, which is of course a lawful supposition. Then he proceeds to a consideration of the lines themselves: "And yet this distich . . . falls very much below the poet's own scheme; nor is the diction unexceptionable." After citing a few passages to show that the grief of Adam and Eve at their eviction was not so great as it ought to have been, he asks: "Why then does this distich dismiss our first parents in anguish and the reader in melancholy? And how can the expression be justified, with wandering steps and slow? Why wandering? Erratic steps? Very improper: when in the line before they were guided by Providence." This really sounds more like Hannah More than Bentley, but it is he. "Shall I, therefore, after so many prior presumptions, presume at last to offer a distich, as close as may be to the author's words, and entirely agreeable to his scheme?"

Then, hand in hand, with social steps
their way
Through Eden took, with heavenly
comfort cheered."

Oh infinity of bathos! The curious will find this and a hundred other masterpieces of editing in an edition of *PARADISE LOST*, in quarto, dated 1732. One is forced to the reluctant conclusion that Bentley was not a fitting person to edit Milton. Nevertheless he was probably as competent to correct the themes of scholars of Trinity as any Master has been, and that is about all that the common man is competent to do.

The matter, then, is reduced more or less to the elements; the genius is put out of court, and only the common man remains. Even he cannot be taught how to write, whatever the manuals may say; he can only be warned that some things should be avoided. For instance, the author of *THE MADNESS OF NABUCHODONOSOR* could be told that his letter would have been more likely to influence an editor had he not employed certain mannerisms which savour of the salesman rather than of the poet. Possibly he thought that a letter from a poet who was evidently a keen man of business would be a guarantee of the value of his poems, but he was entirely wrong. The average editor might tolerate *please find enclosed*: he might even pass over a split infinitive (we apologise for the unclean phrase), but when he came to *same* he would shudder; he could not help it; and when he found the unhappy word used again in the next sentence but one, the poet's chance of having his work read would be gone.

The things that really must be avoided are very few in number, so few that one wonders that writers should find them a perpetual stumbling-block. The first of them is what is popularly, or at least journalistically, known as the split infinitive. We read in the papers a month or two ago how that much quoted man Mr. Bernard Shaw made a characteristic

(why, by the way, cannot another epithet be found for Mr. Shaw's utterances?) defence of this familiar part of speech at a conference held to discuss the question, Are the Study and Love of Literature Decaying in English Schools? No one, according to the report of the meeting, seems to have pointed out the obvious fact that what has never existed cannot decay, but Mr. Shaw wisely said that it was impossible for school-boys to care less about English literature than they did. He went on to defend the split infinitive, and said that "the natural healthy-minded Englishman always splits his infinitives,—so following the genius of the English language, which was to split everything." We do not quite follow the latter half of his defence, which surely sounds rather like words for the sake of wit; but with his statement that the Englishman splits his infinitives we cordially agree. He does, though we are inclined to think that it arises from exceeding health of body rather than of mind, therein coinciding with Mr. H. G. Wells, who is especially the advocate of indigestion and kindred ills as aids to composition. Why, then, does the Englishman maltreat his infinitives thus? We suppose it is because he has a vague idea of the importance of emphasis, and has grasped the fact that emphasis in writing is to a certain extent attained by altering the order of words. Thus it comes that any given public body concerned to put down some nuisance will conclude its report with the words "by which they hope to effectually stop it." It is a laudable endeavour to express the firmness of their action in words, but it produces less effect in the reader's mind than the natural sequence, "to stop it effectually," which conjures up at once police-

men, the law, the bench, and even fourteen days.

In fairness we must admit that there are exceptions to the rule, and that here and there it is necessary to place an adverb between the preposition and the verb, both to secure emphasis and to avoid awkwardness. We believe that our grammarians are so bold as to make rules to govern exceptions, and to declare, when they have made them, that there are no such things as exceptions; but such liberties are not for us. We can only go so far as to say that the lawfulness of transposing verb and adverb seems to depend on the relative size and importance of each. Thus if we have to use a small weak adverb such as *really* with the sonorous infinitive *to sympathise* we might put it after *to*; if, however, the adverb is some such awe-inspiring word as *categorically* we should be horrified to find it there.

Having generously conceded certain exceptions we will venture to assert that they are rare, perhaps five in a hundred. The chances are, moreover, that in these five cases the healthy-bodied Englishman would refuse to take advantage of his liberty, for the simple, and glorious, reason that he is an Englishman. Thus ninety-five times out of a hundred he would be wrong, and the other five he would also be wrong,—an Englishman's privilege. We have tried to be fair to this part of speech, and therefore will not shrink from a quotation which in a measure makes against us. The subject was being discussed not long ago in an Oxford Common-Room, and opinion was rather divided. Some said one thing and some said another, but the last word rested with a gentleman who observed that, "For his part, he would rather see young men splitting their infinitives than their

whiskies and sodas." There is little more to be said, when the whole questions of ethics and language are thus presented to you in one sentence. We will pass on.

From the split infinitive we will turn to an error even more beloved of the healthy-bodied Englishman, an error to be found with absolute certainty in nearly every page of his inditing. We refer to *and which*, the terror of editors, because it is so apt to pass unnoticed even in proof. *And which* has more excuse for it than the split infinitive, because it arises out of a genuine mental confusion, and it has some justification perhaps for many people, because it is used by not a few of our great writers. We have met with it in Sir Walter Scott, and have found it in George Borrow's books with disconcerting frequency. Nevertheless it is an error in the common man, unless he can write like Scott and Borrow in other respects, which we doubt. We will take an instance from *THE GYPSIES IN SPAIN* to show how easy it is to fall into this pitfall: "I will take the present opportunity of saying a few words about a practice of theirs, highly characteristic of a wandering people, and which is only extant among those of the race who still continue to wander much." The confusion arises, of course, from the fact that the sentence *highly characteristic of a wandering people* is relational in effect, and is equal to *which is highly characteristic*, etc.; had this been written, the following *and which* would have been correct, but as it is *and* is unnecessary. To many people this may seem a trivial point, but avoiding the unnecessary is a secret of good writing and easy reading. Now at the risk of incurring a charge of literary snobbishness we will say frankly that, while we can forgive this peculiarity in Borrow, if we

found this error in any writings of the common man of which we had the editing, we would destroy them without compunction. It is not so very long ago, by the way, that we saw a little pamphlet written by some German professor (whose name we regret to have forgotten), partly for the purpose of condemning the German equivalent of *and which* used in the same way. He was quite comminatory. We are looking anxiously for something of the same sort in French, for *et qui* is much favoured in that tongue.

The word *same* as used by our friend the author of *THE MADNESS OF NABUCHODONOSOR* condemns itself so utterly that we need not waste time over it. His knack of ending his sentences with unimportant prepositions is an offence against almost every principle of euphony, emphasis, appearance,—in short, of language. His other peculiarities arise out of his native genius, and, save as examples of carelessness and bad grammar, they call for no particular censure.

We warned the reader that our reflections were to be desultory, and we shall make no apology for the fact that we only choose an instance here and there of what seems to us to be amiss in popular writing. It may be that some of our dislikes are the result of prejudice, as many well-considered authors make use of phrases which offend us, but we are under the impression that where there is dislike there is also a reason for it, inadequate perhaps, but still a reason.

Not long ago we read an article in one of the *Quarterly Reviews* in which the writer seemed particularly fond of a redundant *of them*. On every possible occasion, so it seemed to us, instead of beginning a sentence with the natural *they all*, he used *all of them*, and ended it in the same

way instead of with the natural *them all*. It is a slight matter no doubt, and only noticeable as a mannerism when very frequently repeated, but it jarred on us as an unnecessary and unbeautiful use of words. A somewhat similar mannerism is the use of what we may call an enclitic *one* or *ones*: "The pens of my aunt are good" says Ollendorf; but the healthy-bodied Englishman (and more particularly woman) in making the same brilliant reflection says "The pens of my aunt are good ones." It may be fastidious in us to object to *ones* here, but it is certainly unnecessary to the sentence and possibly even harmful to it; we should be more convinced of the merit of the pens if *good* were allowed to have its proper emphasis and value, while *ones* just seems to give them the benefit of the doubt.

A weekly journal lately discussed the use of *averse to*, and one or two correspondents attacked it with violence. We admit that its use is not justified by its derivation, but on the other hand it appears to us to be more euphonic than *averse from*, which is a good deal in its favour. Besides we have already treated the venerable Latin language so ill that we see no reason to be pedantic in this one instance. We are deeply indebted to the dead; let us follow the custom of heirs and forget our obligations so soon as may be.

From the expedient standpoint of ingratitude, then, we have a language of our own, and it should be our pride and privilege to keep it reasonably pure. This would probably be easy enough, were it not for another language which is not unlike it. To the undiscerning eye, indeed, it is identical with English; for many purposes of journalism it serves just as well, being not altogether unintelligible to an Englishman. A little practice, however, and a little analysis

of the halfpenny papers soon enable a reader to detect the dissimilarity of the two. We were pleased to see a discriminating review recently, which spoke of a certain book as being translated into "fairly fluent American." To be able to detect fluency one would need to have studied the language in Chicago; but, as we said, after a little practice one can discover the main differences between American and English almost as readily as between Italian and Spanish.

Now it might be thought that Americans would have been the first to acknowledge that they had a language of their own, and yet we have met citizens of the United States who have become exceedingly angry when we ventured to tell them so. "I guess," said one of them, "that what you call Amuracan is the only form of English which is English anyway." This opinion is too involved to be very intelligible, but we seem to see a meaning in it which may explain the American standpoint. Perhaps the gentleman, and others like him, regard English, as we understand it, as a sort of dead language. If it is not so, why should Americans be angry when they are told that their language is their own? It is not consistent with their attitude of wondering admiration of themselves and all that is theirs, which is only surpassed, perhaps, among the nations of the world by the similar attitude in Englishmen towards all that is English,—excepting only their language.

It is a noble dispute and worthy of arbitration. Let us turn to the land of scholars and ask its opinion, with the comfortable assurance that it will support us. Take any ten German students and congratulate them on their knowledge of English. They will all be pleased, but five of them in

the interests of truth will feel bound to tell you that they do not know English very well, having only learnt it from an American. This, however, is only a verbal confirmation; let us also call educational literature to our aid. There is a series of popular handbooks in foreign languages much circulated in Germany, known as the POLYGLOTT KUNTZE series. In this series are issued two volumes side by side, one for DIE ENGLISCHE SPRACHE, the other for DIE AMERIKANISCHE SPRACHE. In the American handbook there is a *Vorwort*, which according to our interpretation contains in a nutshell the German belief as to the dissimilarity of the two languages. It runs: "*Jeder, der nach Nord-America oder Australien will, muss Englisch können* (Intending travellers to North America [Canada] or Australia must be able to speak English);" and this, being paraphrased, implies, "They must also purchase our companion instructor to the English language." This is as much as to say that a knowledge of American will be of no use in Canada or Australia. To us this is most convincing, and for once we are grateful to the Germans.

The existence of this controversy shows that the boundaries of the two languages march together, and that the god Terminus has not done his duty in the matter of landmarks and palings. However, we have discovered that nature has been so kind as to separate the two by a small Rubicon, which is clearly visible to those who have no desire to trespass. Geographers and pioneers are mostly derided (is not Herodotus the father of lies?), and therefore we expect no better fate for ourselves. Nevertheless, we will impart our discovery to the incredulous world. For some time we have had suspicions of a certain word which seemed to move

in such highly respectable, we might almost say aristocratic, circles, that we hardly dared to breathe our suspicions even to ourselves. It was only when we discovered that the Americans had made this word peculiarly their own that we made up our mind, first to discard it, and later to attack it. This word is *commence*. It is with regret as well as diffidence that we feel bound to assail it, for the substantive *commencement* has an honourable significance in the university at which we once prosecuted our studies. Moreover the verb occurs in Shakespeare some six times, the noun twice, the present participle once, and we cannot conceal from ourselves that our most worthy ancestors were in the habit of *commencing* authors.

Yet our hand is to a certain extent forced by the realisation to which we have alluded, and we try to console ourselves with the reflection that the word's antecedents are not worthy of much respect. On consulting authorities we learn that the French *commencer* is derived from the Latin *cum-initiare*. *Initiare* we know,—Cicero and Livy use it—and *cum* we know, but what is *cum-initiare*? It sounds like a Latin word derived from the Italian. When we contrast this ancestry with that of the despised *begin*, which is traced back by Kluge to a pre-Teutonic *bhi-kenoð* of which the root *ken* is decently Aryan, we wonder that even America can hesitate between the two. In its early stages *commence* was merely pompous, but pomposity was soon swallowed up in the genteel. "Persons of quality," balls, concerts, *conversazioni*, in fact, all things that imply compulsory evening-dress, *commence*. On the other hand, we cannot imagine the French Revolution or the Roman Empire doing otherwise than beginning. In short, to us the word savours of that "gentility-nonsense"

of which Borrow's undying appendix is the nine-thonged scourge.

It may be objected that this is a merely sentimental argument. So it is, and why not? Good English sentiment has its uses in a matter of language, if only in competition with a cheaper article from America. Therefore, sustained by both reason and sentiment, we will not hesitate to say strongly that whoso wittingly uses the word *commence* in preference to *begin*, will not scruple to make free use of the resources of the American language; and very likely will split his infinitives, and generally riot in all the things that we have been at some pains to condemn.

We have crossed the Rubicon, so let us take the main road to Chicago, gathering as we go such flowers of speech as may attract our notice.

Before we actually set out, however, let us state that we do not wish to find any fault with colloquial American as it is spoken by the natives themselves. It has an adequate reason for its existence, in that it is the effort of a young race to express the energy and vitality which are their inheritance, and moreover, it is generally humorous in effect, if not in intention,—a cloak for many sins. Thus when we meet a young American lady who constructs her conversational periods on the following skeleton: "See here . . . reckon . . . right along . . . do tell . . . calculate . . . some . . . all the time . . . make me tired . . . any . . . a few . . ." we are pleased, rather than annoyed, because we feel that it is natural for a young American lady to speak in this way; we might even be disappointed if she spoke after the English fashion. Similarly we delight in the odd phrases of the American humourists, because they have a definite meaning and

suggest definite pictures to our mind, and because the result is that we laugh.

We only begin to protest when we find that words of American origin are gradually making their way into our own language and, worse than that, being written down with English pens and printed in English books which aspire, and even attain to some degree of literary merit. In fact our complaint is entirely literary. We do not care, for instance, how much stocks and shares "slump and boom;" from any standpoint higher than that of Mammon it does not matter what they do. Terms of trade and commerce are innocuous; we need not even read the city column, and if we must, we do not look in it for the graces of writing. For that we go to the leading article,—no, we should say we used to go to it, for of late we are disappointed. We find that even the graceful leader-writer *booms* and *slumps* now, in inverted commas it is true, but that is only because the words are still a species of joke when so tricked out. The canons of good taste and the unwritten laws of editorial decorum require that to every leading-article there shall be affixed two original witticisms, and the writer knows that for some time past these words, quoted, have fulfilled all requirements, and that they will probably continue to do so for a further period, for jokes live to a green old age in England. This is quite as it should be, but all things have an end. Some day a constant reader will find that he has seen the jokes before, and will write to say so; or perhaps the editor will suddenly realise that inverted commas in a page are unsightly. In either case the poor writer will have to erase his quotation-marks, and rack his brain for new witticisms, and *slump* and *boom* will become part of our language.

This is a typical process; it is a new illustration of the result of familiarity. Perhaps someone will say that in a leading-article these things do not matter, because no one reads leading-articles except editors and politicians searching for a policy. We will not labour the point, we will use the *argumentum ad hominem* and say, "Well, look at novels, you read them of course." It is positively worse in novels, because they are for the most part written by persons of weak intellect and small vocabulary who are only too thankful to pick up a word here and there as they can find it. We have lately been reading an American novel which will illustrate our meaning admirably. It is a good story, full of life and strength, in fact one of the best that we have seen from the other side of the Atlantic. This being the case it is safe to assert that it will find imitators over here because it deals with a period and a locality new to the English public. As to that we will say nothing, as many novelists might do much worse; but we should like to suggest to the prospective imitators that they should limit their fidelity to the matter and manner and not copy too exactly the language in which it is written, for from the point of view of those who respect the English tongue it is not in any way commendable.

We will take a few instances at random of the abuse and invention of words in this book, in order to show what dangers lie before our little novelists unless they are careful. On the second page we find the alarming adverb *sizzlingly* onomatopœically used in connection with cooking. The word itself defies comment; it is too new, too Aristophanic, but it illustrates a vicious tendency to make adverbs out of present participles whenever a riotous

fancy dictates. We may quote *pantingly, fumblingly, half-flutteringly*, as instances of what this may occasion. Nor is the past participle immune, for we find such odd adverbs as *verriedly* and *embarrassedly* set seriously out as words. Indeed it is principally on adverbs and adjectives that young America exerts its inventive powers. Often the use of curious expressions arises from a praiseworthy determination on the part of the writer to make a scene vivid, which blinds him to the possibility that he might make it still more vivid by being more simple. "The well-scoured planks glared *whitely* under the afternoon sun," says our author. Why not *white*? Again "she swung about *heart sickly* back to him;" why not—well, we confess we are not sure what the sentence means, except that, if it mean anything at all it should, from the context, mean exactly the reverse to what it would mean in English, so we will not suggest an emendation. "Her voice grew *breathy* with terror;" if this conveys anything to one's mind, it is hardly what the author intended. "His eyes were *wonted* to the darkness now;" as the past participle of an active verb *wonted* is new to us, and we must frankly own that we do not like it. Again we find a lady with a *coppery* head, an attribute that may commend itself to the writers of sonnets. The hero of the book does all sorts of strange things. "He *vised* himself to manual labour;" other people did it for him too, for when he was in the stocks "the merciless frame *vised* him fast;" the verb *to vise* is a revelation to us, and would seem to be derived from the noun *vice* by false analogy (blessed words!) with the verb *advise*. However, the only possible meaning we could read into it would be expressive of what consuls do to

passports. Of course the hero *sensed* things; he could not be in America without so doing. We suppose to *sense* is a verb invented to supplement the noun *intuition*; well, it is better than *to intuit*, which we have heard from the lips of youth. A remarkable adjective is *swaggerish*, which we should really only have expected to find in a book of nonsense-verses as a rhyme to *liquorish*, and which we should not have considered good even then. *Albe* used for *albeit* also sounds strangely, as does *so he* for *so that he*. The use which has taken our fancy most, however, occurs in a scene where the hero was being kind to a horse and in the process *fed it apples*. We cannot help wondering whether the day will come when the Lord Mayor will *feed his guests turtles*. Or perhaps this expression is only used of animals, and perhaps in America a human being would be fed *with* apples; we remember that the Germans use different words for eating, *essen* and *fressen*, according to whether the eater is man or beast.

Such are some of the oddities to be found in even a really good American novel. From another book, of the smart sensational kind, we have gathered some expressions from the first few pages (as many as we could read in fact) which are not so insidious because they are more obviously vile. An adjective *disgruntled* is used two or three times. It is unknown to us, and therefore by itself, meaningless, but from the contexts we gather that when a big man walks hurriedly down a crowded street, pushing all comers out of his way, the result on the persons pushed is that they become *disgruntled*. There are in the story a *silvered-haired old colon*, and a young gentleman who is *no dabster at reading the ways of the mutable woman heart*, and who determines to *play*

the queen for my whole stack of chips in connection with the said heart. The gates were widely ajar, he sleekly smiled, to offset any private researches, he refuges himself, are all typical phrases from this alarming branch of literature, if it may so be called.

Concerning American spelling we know, with Herodotus, what our opinion is, but would rather not say. Many English authorities have decided that *center*, *meter* and so forth are correct, though how they have arrived at this conclusion we know not. Philologists split up the Greek word *κέντρον* into root *κεν*, suffix *τρο*, termination *ν*. The insertion of the *e* between the *t* and the *r* appears to have no justification, save by a resuscitation and abuse of the disease known as *epenthesis*, defined by Victor Henry as "the spontaneous development of a parasitic sound which is inserted between the elements of a group," which definition should be enough to frighten the boldest. But we are no philologists, and there may be reasons which we cannot fathom;

at any rate for our own part we propose to continue to write *centre*. Here is a list of American words, on which our only comment shall be a note of exclamation. *Defense, pretense, rumor, dishonor, labor, counselor, traveler, imperiled, groveled, marveled, untrammeled, and maneuver!* We do not in the least care how the Americans spell, but in these days of simultaneous editions on either side of the Atlantic we see danger to our own spelling, about which we do care. What might save the situation yet would be the advent of a great American lexicographer, who should gather the scattered threads and put down once and for all, — in a book — what the American language is and what it is not, so that our weaker heads may know what to avoid.

Let all good men and true join together in earnest prayer that Connecticut O. Johnson (or whatever is to be his hallowed name) may come soon, and in the meantime stand shoulder to shoulder and pen to pen in the defence, and for the preservation of our unhappy language.

THE TRUE DECADENCE.

It is a natural tendency of man to become at certain periods in history exceedingly artificial; and this tendency, so bemoaned by those amusing people who hold that everything unfamiliar must be vicious, is after all only his gallant protest against a tradition that grows outworn, his assertion of that privilege of anti-nomianism which is one of his inalienable rights. When the natural ceases to be instinctive, when the tradition of it is handed down from father to son and from master to disciple with painful piety, when, in fact, the secret of life and the secret of art are apparently obvious at last, then the natural becomes the conventional, men fulfil their destiny with the tedious regularity of the inventions of a mechanic or a positivist philosopher, the individual is sacrificed on the altar of the type, and the mighty winds of Homer are lulled into the charming but attenuated atmosphere of the *Bucolics* of Virgil.

This is true, of course, in life; it is true also in art. For when the literature, for instance, of any country has lost the fresh, fine creative spirit and has begun to be academic, or didactic, or basely dependent on tradition, it is not hard to prophesy a period of conventional stagnation, remarkable perhaps for its brilliance, its satire, and its wonderful and horrible power of uttering moral platitudes as if they were grand, new-found truths, but certainly remarkable also for its entire lack of that vital strength of vision, that power of distinguishing eternal reality from transitory appearance, which we

call genius. The age of small things begins, now hieratic, now frivolous, either divided into cliques and coteries which hold a great number of meetings and achieve nothing remarkable, or blindly obedient to the unchanging laws of its dominant school of writers.

As we study such dreary periods in the unimpassioned pages of the literary historian, we think of them as artificial, but we scarcely ever call them decadent. This dreadful word we reserve for another product of these epochs of exhaustion,—the band of those who are sick to death of the solemn, monotonous rule of order, and who, in sheer despair, fly to the other extreme, break convention and shatter sentiment, and altogether behave like abandoned literary anarchists. Decadence, indeed, though so freely used as a term of reproach in our own day, is applied to the dead ages with tremulous caution; and perhaps the literary critic only feels on really safe ground when he is dealing with the late Roman writers, the dramatists who succeeded Shakespeare, and the delightful and delicate prose of Sir Thomas Browne. This is rather absurd of the literary critic, and shows that he has a feeble sense of the period which he happens to be investigating. Harmodius and Aristogeiton were the most accomplished anarchists of their age, but his feeling of reverence will blind him to this painful truth; and when the LYRICAL BALLADS appeared, its authors would assuredly have been damned as decadents, if the word had been in their day, as it is now, the most venomous shaft in the critic's ample armoury.

It is not easy to imagine the horror that our critic would feel if suddenly confronted with a contemporary review of *THE ANCIENT MARINER*, denouncing that noble ballad as unnatural, morbid, and a violation of all the canons of art and morality. It is hard to realise that the poems of Wordsworth were regarded by our forefathers with deep suspicion, just as their immediate descendants looked askance at the dangerous modernity of Tennyson's earlier works. But so it was; everything unknown is suspected, and the tasteless majority have always been distrustful of the newly revealed salt of the earth. The attitude of the mass of mankind towards any new thing is still the attitude of those primitive peoples whose language boasted a single word to signify both stranger and enemy.

I will not further sadden our critic with a catalogue of all the great decadents of the world from Euripides to Milton. Indeed, he would not believe me, for decadence, apparently, is either the name we give to contemporary movements whose importance we do not comprehend, or to movements in the past which are strange, grotesque, and inexplicable. But the disparaging sense in which the word is used has a purely arbitrary foundation, and is due to fusion of the moral with the æsthetic standpoint. Certainly, if art is to be tried at the bar of morality, what we call decadence is, perhaps, more often in danger of the judgment than any other art-movement, for the decadent is usually antinomian with regard to matter as well as with regard to form, and finds a savage joy in breaking free from the charmed circle of petty virtues and petty vices with great alarums and excursions. But there seems to be no particular reason why these Moral Assizes of literature should be held elsewhere than in the

pulpit and the Young Ladies' Library; and if there is one, it does not concern us here: in fact, it concerns no one but the student of absurdity. The rage of the pedantic against religious doubt and sexual frankness has all the charm of a thoroughly theatrical exhibition; but it is nothing to their rage when they perceive their own faces in the mirror of art, and Molière spoke truly of them when he wrote, in the preface to that immortal comedy which the hysteria of his age sought to suppress with a charge of impiety: "Those [the previous plays] only attacked piety, but this one attacks these people themselves, and mimics, and that is what they cannot endure." Moral systems and moral indignation are usually the fine flowers of an immoral age.

But the point of this enquiry is not whether decadence is viciously abominable or virtuously glorious, but if, in applying the name to small antinomian and anti-traditional movements, we are dignifying these with an appellation which properly belongs to something else. For this decadence is often less artificial than the age in which it makes its baleful appearance, the age of the natural gone to seed. As we have seen, it arises wilfully through sheer weariness of old traditions, but instead of returning to nature like Wordsworth, it takes some minor development of art as its model, or attaches enormous importance to singularity of form and vagueness of matter, to the startling and the grotesque, the terrible and the fantastic. There is nothing essentially artificial in these qualities; life is far more vague than the verse of the most preposterous and delightful of our symbolists; the grotesque and the terrible are real enough, but they startle the ordinary person, and as the ordinary person cannot account for his sensations in any other way,

he pronounces the employment of these methods to be inartistic and wicked, and decadence with him becomes a synonym for evil. He forgets that a work of art is never evil unless it is too true to be good, merely obscene, or horrible beyond fear; and then it is no longer a work of art.

In that curiously artificial period, the last ten years of the nineteenth century, the investigator of antiquities will not fail to observe one of these movements of revolt in England. Its members modelled their literary behaviour on those *symbolistes* and *décadents* who, in the early eighties, made the Boulevard St. Michel the most amusing place in Paris,—more amusing even than the Académie Française of Daudet's pages, or the Académie Française of actuality. They read Gautier and Flaubert, and translated *LES FLEURS DU MAL*. They hailed as brothers that ardent band, which, with M. Catulle Mendès marching suavely at its head, discovered the Hörselberg and baptized it Parnassus. Clad in the dyed garments of foolishness they tramped across the sandy wastes of the respectable, and with Mr. Whistler spoke unkindly of the sunset, and with M. Rimbaud decreed the colours of music. They possessed theories, not only on the art of literature, but on the art of life. Some of their number attempted to emulate the eccentricities of the unfortunate hero of A REBOURS, with dyspeptic results. Others lived only for the higher contemplation, and were well known in the music-halls. They affected to forget the duties and to care only for the beauties of life, but their thirst for the latter was often easily quenched. Yet though we may deride the theories of life and art so loquaciously propounded by these funny, wicked people, and though we may bombard their writings from the

frowning fortress of our morality, still, if they produced works of art, they must escape our censure. Certainly they erred, for in their eagerness to show that art had nothing to do with morals, they almost tried to prove that immorality, and immorality alone, was its true medium. The saying of Plato, that vice has many sides, but virtue only one, is perhaps their best excuse; but at least they are convicted of monotonously narrow sympathies. It is a warped æsthetic sense that cannot perceive the beauty of simplicity and goodness. However, angrily to condemn their work as unhealthy is to commit a critical solecism; to apply the terms of physiology to art is as illogical as to appraise orchids by their weight or roses by the flavour of their petals. Art is only unhealthy to those who have already the disease of an inartistic mind.

To this kind of period, then, we give the name of decadence. But does such a small and isolated cult of artificiality really merit this appellation? Should we not rather reserve it for those epochs whose writers are remarkable for a general and mournful deficiency of the artistic spirit, and whose readers are callously contented with the slovenly and the garish? When realism degenerates into a chronicle of the unimportant, and romanticism becomes a puppet-show of paint and tinsel whose limp figures jerkily obey the unimaginative commands of the archæologist or the historian; when the drama is a show-room for the dresses and doings of the dull, or a temple where the devout can worship sham princes and impossible peers; when poetry totters on the slack wire of convention, and painting possesses a Helicon of its own with a number of prosperous gentlemen for Muses,—when, in fine, the art of any country not only

becomes slavishly imitative of anti-
quity or firmly fettered by a dominant
school, but also gradually gives place
to the spurious products of those who
are not artists, then, surely the real
decadence appears. The true decline
of art begins with the popularity of
the inartistic.

The question as to how far the
Greeks were naturally gifted with the
artistic temperament has perturbed
the minds of many, and no doubt
there are some who think that when
the *ANTIGONE* was awarded the first
prize at the Dionysia, certain of those
present testified their disapproval in
the emphatic and vulgar manner of
a modern first-night audience. It is
always difficult for anyone to realise
that a love of the beautiful was once
a national attribute; it is doubly
difficult for us, who have come to
regard such an unprofitable instinct
with deep suspicion, and grudgingly
to devote to art a little tithe of our
little leisure. Yet even though dis-
sident whispers may have been
heard when the last lines of the
masterpiece of Sophocles died away in
the April air, and though some un-
imaginative leather-seller or politician
of Athens may have murmured at the
frieze of Phidias, and some decadent
critic may have hurled his polemic at
the Embarcation of Polygnotos or the
Centaur of Zeuxis, yet the Greeks,
in their finest period, were not merely
an artistic nation; they were a nation
of artists. How far evolution has
wafted us from such an extraordinary
state may be realised by anyone who
cares to haunt the subscription-library,
or to listen to the loud comments of
ignorance in our galleries. The
average consumer of fiction does not
care to know if a book be worth
reading, but if it is being read; and in
every exhibition may be seen

Somebody calm as Zeno
At naked High Art,

even though they are not

in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino.

In fact, the attitude of most of us
towards literature and art is either
anxious bewilderment, or lamb-like
devotion to the book or the picture
which has been pronounced very good
by such excellent authority that it
would really be a waste of time to
examine it closely. In a period of
art that is sturdily independent, such
an attitude, even when it is adopted
by an enormous majority, matters but
little. That it was the attitude of
the time when Byron and Shelley and
Keats wrote seems fairly obvious from
contemporary letters, yet it does not
appear to have influenced the creative
power of those poets. But the petty
Giffords and Jeffreys of our day,
though they launch milder thunder-
bolts, issue their *non-placets* in a man-
ner truly Olympian, and often possess
all the pompous dogmatism of the
satirist whom Hazlitt satirically nick-
named retainer of the Muses and
door-keeper of learning. Our literary
cliques, in fact, are really the cliques
of the critic, and our admiration for
any book is often only a corollary to
our respect for a reviewer. However,
I do not desire to exaggerate the
importance of contemporary criticism;
I am aware that a great many diligent
readers completely ignore it, and that
it is of no avail, for good or for evil,
in the case of those mysterious writers
who enjoy a truly Titanic popularity.
The decadence of our literature does
not proceed from the writer's fear of
the reviewer, but from his complete
knowledge of what the public wants,
and his complete ability to minister to
its needs.

For the readers of England have
a quality that is entirely distinct from
those of lamb like devotion and be-

wilderness. They will suddenly rise in their thousands, and, amid the wonder of gods, men and critics, award the prize of their approval to some lady or gentleman who may seem to the calm philosopher to be the very last person in the world to merit such an honour. The student of literature will stare aghast at this strange deluge of appreciation, and vainly endeavour to account for it. It is the one disease which does not admit of diagnosis. The readers of England may be illiterate, and the books of their favourites may be illiterate also; but that the illiteracy of the one should so completely harmonise with that of the other, is surely the eighth wonder of the world. It is possible, indeed, that these idols of our day obtain their popularity by chance rather than by their own cunning. Their melodramatic qualities, their affectation of omniscience, their light-hearted pronouncements on questions which give pause to the profoundest philosophers and subtlest theologians, their quotations of Scripture to their own advantage, and their misquotations of the classics to the advantage of nobody,—all these fearful features of their works may be due to their good fortune rather than to their fault. They may even have imagined that they were scrambling up the scarp side of Helicon, when actually they were gliding down towards the mephitic vapours of Avernus, and the offerings that they cast to the Cerberus of popularity may really have been dedicated to Apollo and the Nine. But whatever their motives may have been, the result of them is theatrical, pompous, and inartistic, and the only conclusion to be drawn is that the inartistic, the pompous, and the theatrical are the qualities which are dearest to the mass of English readers to-day.

While we may generously admit,

however, that our idols attained their shrines by accident, and that they won the public adoration by being not "wiser than they knew," but more inartistic, they must incur our condemnation on another count. To plumb the obscure waters of popularity is to accomplish a feat that is as lamentable in result as it is wonderful in performance; for so soon as the dreadful secret of shallowness is out, so soon as it is obvious that there is a large class of people who are satisfied with debased literature, the immediate consequence will be a ministering multitude of debased writers. If, as the Greek proverb says, beautiful things are difficult, the opposite may certainly be accounted true; and since ugly things are so easily produced, the literary arena will soon become the scene of barbarian triumphs, and the successful and soulless candidate for popular favour, basking in the sunshine of his own celebrity, will give as much attention to the lyre of Apollo as any other placid man of business would bestow on the bleating accordian of an Italian mendicant beneath his window. Literature will pass from the sphere of art to the domain of the artful, and its honours will be showered, not on those who, in Matthew Arnold's words, make a study of perfection, but on those who can estimate, with a nicety that sometimes seems almost a perverted kind of genius, the exact nature of the demand of the moment. Some of these cunning people frankly admit that they write "with an eye on the public,"—an attitude which may perhaps account for their tortured syntax and stale phraseology: others solemnly assert that literature is the slave of the reader, and art the minion of the many; but whether they confess or extenuate their crimes, the fact remains that the greater part

of the creative work of to-day, when judged by the standard of the literature of all dead centuries, is jejune and unimaginative. We may call it art; but the laughter of the Muses echoes among the hollows of their hill.

More popularity, however, is not the only reward sought by these writers. The Cerberus to whom they cast their offerings guards, not the palace of Pluto, but the treasury of Plutus, and the author of a popular novel observes his work from a point of view as mercenary as that of the publisher, and far more inartistic than that of the printer or the binder. The ignoble science of making books has assumed all the dignity of a profession, and has attracted to its ranks many whom Fate, in her blindness, destined to the Bar and the Bishopric. Thither go the mute, inglorious politicians, the soldiers guiltless of a foe-man's blood, and the gentlemen whose fine instinct for business would have better employment east of Fleet Street. Thither go the ignorant of life and the ignorant of art, who none the less possess a beautiful intuition as to what is vendable. "Into the night go one and all," duped by the glitter of a petty popularity, caring nothing for patience, and the study of perfection, and the toil after beauty; anxious only that their books, in Mr. Kipling's exquisite phrase, should sell like hot cakes.

There is no obvious reason why an author should not be paid directly for his writings, but there are surely grave objections to his writing directly for pay. People are accustomed to quote the example of Oliver Goldsmith in support of the theory that a man of genius may be at once a hireling of Grub Street and a consummate artist, forgetting that the case of that kindly sentimentalist is almost unique in the whole history of

letters. It was not by means of THE CITIZEN OF THE WORLD and THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD that Goldsmith endeavoured to meet the demands of the creator of his purple silk breeches and his scarlet roquelaure, or to pacify the upholsterers of his elaborate apartment in Brick Court, but with the proceeds of his second-hand Histories, his forgotten Brevities, and his Abridgements. He affords us the pathetic yet not inadmirable spectacle of a single being who could actually produce both highly-finished prose and ordinary journalism. He is the literary forerunner of Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll. But the example that he set should not, and, I think, cannot be followed. To possess at once a prose style and a desire for riches is to keep a lamb in the cage of a wolf.

With the question of actual want we need not concern ourselves. Is there, indeed, anyone in whose heart the question remains unanswered? Personal privations may perhaps be borne, but the artist who lets his children starve for the sake of an ideal must be judged in a higher court than that in which I plead. The point which I wish to assert is not that it is always wrong to earn money by writing, but that when a great portion of what is called literature is produced to supply, if I may so phrase it, some long-felt want of the writer; when well-meaning people gravely publish books entitled HOW TO WRITE FOR THE MAGAZINES under the somewhat cumbrous signature of *Five Hundred a year by it*; when pseudo-literary journals devote a great deal of their valuable space to silly gossip about the very ordinary private life of very ordinary men of letters, and piously chronicle the fact that Mr. Smith bought his old castle with the proceeds of forty editions of FROM THE SINK TO THE SCEPTRE, and Mr. Brown obtained his new Raphael

with the rewards of A CAREER OF CRIME; when we are told that novels must be of a certain length to sell adequately, and that exquisite form of art, the short story, sells very little, and poetry won't sell at all,—then, surely, the financial element has assumed too great an importance to be anything but ominous to honest art. It may be urged that these ephemeral offenders have nothing to do with literature, and that in a few years their works will be as completely unknown to the ordinary reader as the pamphlets of Martin Marprelate or the dull polemics of Gabriel Harvey. But the writer who is not on the side of art is art's enemy, for if he is read at all he furthers the decline of the public taste that he has so ably estimated. Like other vices, the love of unworthy literature becomes more insistent through being gratified, and each illiterate book that is hailed as a masterpiece may be accounted the active enemy of contemporary or future works of genius.

Let us turn, however, from the contemplation of these apostates to the more gracious task of observing those writers who certainly cannot be classed with them, but who are popular among people with more or less rational pretensions to literary judgment. However debased the greater part of public opinion may be, it will be said that the maintenance of our literary traditions is safe in the careful hands of such a writer as Mr. Anthony Hope, and has nothing to do with the caprice of our gods of clay. This is perfectly true; and if the writers who are engaged in the anxious task of producing work that may be considered representative of our epoch are entirely guiltless of all the faults of their base brethren, then to proclaim the period decadent is to be self-condemned as an alarmist.

But there is some excuse for agitation when the flamens and vestals of our temple of art show signs of a lamentably secular behaviour, seeking to gratify an ignoble desire for the sensational, or a foolish pleasure in bald truth to the unimportant details of contemporary manners, or using a form of art purely as a medium for moral didacticism.

The craving for the sensational, that deeply rooted characteristic of humanity which, apparently, in Spain finds its satisfaction in witnessing great slaughter of bulls and horses, and in France in fighting innocuous duels, has extended in England from the cock-pit and the prize-ring to the theatre and the library; and the English play-goer who seems capable of appreciating a vast amount of placid dullness, is nevertheless often delighted with superfluous emotional horseplay. The rather incomprehensible behaviour of Maldonado in the last act of *Iris* has at least proved to us that Mr. Pinero, whatever may be his deficiencies as a student of the dramatic art, has little to learn as a student of the modern audience; and he is not the only one of our dramatists who has realised that although the presentment of a broken heart may leave his critics cold, real furniture realistically shattered will instantly awaken all their deep, though dormant, emotions. How often, too, in fiction, is unity of outline sacrificed for the sake of the startling; how often is our pleasure in a strongly-conceived plot marred by the interpolation of thrilling but unnecessary incidents! Some of our novelists and essayists, indeed, scorning more vulgar methods, resolve to startle us solely by means of the extraordinary form of their prose; but the result of their intention is for the most part merely depressing. The serious writings of Mrs. Meynell are often like a sadly

formal children's party; her adjectives play at General Post to the music of faint flutes, or dance listlessly with inappropriate past participles; and Mr. Bernard Capes, having chiselled some really striking figures from the marble of his imagination, becomes ashamed, apparently, of their exquisite nudity, and hastily swathes them in a strange cerement of obscure diction.

And how many of our writers, refusing to realise that the commonplace details of life are only materials for fiction, and that art, as Aristotle pointed out, deals not with what has actually come to pass but with what should and may happen, seek to usurp the realm of the chronicler, and reproduce with a truly painful accuracy the unimportant maladies of their day! There are certain readers who think that a book is proved to be excellent when they are able to exclaim that it is just like life; but the exclamation proves nothing except the mournful truth that they are completely ignorant of the distinction between art and history. The careful pictures which our novelists draw of music-halls, and railway stations, and theatres, and all the other places where we loiter tediously, may be of great value to the archæologist of the future, and their excruciating reproductions of modern slang may amuse the yet unborn philologist, but from the point of view of the student of literature their cleverness will seem entirely wasted. It is true that some great writers have described with minute care every detail of the towns where their characters dwelt or wandered, and it may be asserted that M. Zola, or if not M. Zola, that Balzac has set a precedent worth observance. But what reader of *ILLUSTRATIONS PERDUES* or *SPLendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes* has not sighed when compelled to forsake the tragedy of Lucien de Rubempré or of

Esther for long descriptions of the printing establishment of Séchard or *les anciennes galeries de bois du Palais Royal*? It is not on account of his descriptive details, but in spite of them, that Balzac is immortal; and as for M. Zola,—from being the Baedeker of Sin he has become the Baedeker of Lourdes and Rome and Paris. He crushes his unhappy characters beneath an avalanche of descriptive *débris*; whenever they attempt to move he promptly annihilates them with a fact. Even Mr. George Moore has forsaken him, and has passed among the planets of the Celtic twilight.

Description is only tolerable when it is vitally connected with the characterisation and development of the story that contains it. It is of no use for me to depict the internal arrangement of the third-class carriage in which my hero is travelling, unless that arrangement is a reason for his being slain or safe when an accident occurs. But just as careful, unnecessary descriptions please certain readers immoderately, so characters which talk in a normal way and act as very ordinary human beings act are certain to delight them. The more that the people in a book resemble the people of their acquaintance, the better pleased they will be; and as their acquaintances are usually of unemotional exterior, and say and do nothing very extraordinary, they have a great liking for impeccable stories which flow mildly on to a gratifying conclusion, containing characters excellently drawn from certain common modern types,—the benevolent rector, the fussy old lady, the slangy youth, or the pretty, female financier. They prefer the comfortable customs and truths of to-day to the tumultuous, eternal verities and passions; they like flirtations, and small disappointments, and

quiet successes; in fact, they regard human existence as a pleasant mountain-slope caressed by zephyrs, and try to ignore the volcanic fires roaring within it.

But though we may find a real pleasure in studying the faithful reflection of our mode of life, and though an artist may occasionally discover his material in petty social details, and may construct a masterpiece out of the comedy of class-distinctions or the tragedy of vulgarity, still, this kind of writing usually has the same relation to literature that photography has to painting. It eliminates the personality of the writer and limits the freedom of his imagination, and one cannot help comparing the novelist who wastes his powers on transitory details to a Michelangelo who fashions a masterpiece in fleeting snow. The fault of slavish truth to detail is that it exalts the accidental at the expense of the eternal; and the fault of those comfortable sluggish books which are obviously written by the respectable for the respectable is that they banish passion in favour of a placid sentimentality. There is a third error,—that of ignoring the distinction between the spoken and the written language. To write as ordinary people talk is to commit the solecism of using a temporary and slovenly dialect instead of standard literary English; and perhaps this last fault is the most common of the three. Even that *flamen Dialis* of our literary Capitol, Mr. Anthony Hope, whose delicate sense of comedy and fluent, polished style were certainly meant for fantastic fairy tales and romances too preposterous to be anything but perfectly delightful, has lately fallen a victim to this common malady. Many of the characters in *TRISTAM OF BLENT* no longer talk like the comely people in that charming world which Mr.

Hope has given us, and though the noble disdain and fiery resolution of Harry Tristram are proof against the new method of his creator, even that obstinate hero lapses too often into the bald language of life. We could perhaps forgive him if he had the misfortune to be a real person; we cannot forgive him when he is a character in fiction; least of all can we forgive him when he lives in the pages of Mr. Anthony Hope.

The student of decadence will not fail to note this ominous feature in the prose of a graceful writer. He will observe, too, the cloying aristocratic atmosphere which the novels of John Oliver Hobbes have inherited, apparently, from those of the great Oriental whom she admires so wisely, and will regret that Mr. W. E. Norris is far too contented with the irreproachably good manners of the people of his pages. He will regard with suspicion Mr. Seton Merriman, whose heroes and villains, being either too iniquitous to be wicked or too virtuous to be good, have become mere types of excellence or evil, like the medieval puppets labelled *Invidia*, or *Gula*, or *Virtus*, and who leads one by the hand through perfectly safe places with a wonderful air of melodrama and mystery. He will not rejoice because Mr. Rudyard Kipling has constituted himself the didactic arbiter of our military methods; and if he does not look askance at the neo-realistic and neo-romantic schools of Scotland, it will be because Scotland is such a very remote country that no Englishman can pretend to understand why the chorus of the kailyard should or should not be drowned by the bagpipes of Mr. Neil Munro and of all the writers who strive to flaunt the tartan of Stevenson. He will not concern himself, I fancy, with the enormities of the lady and gentleman

who are the most popular novelists of to-day, for the catalogue of their crimes, duly edited by our reviewers, has become as tedious as the list of their accomplishments; they must be left to near posterity and the Recording Angel. But he will certainly deplore the irreverence of those writers who take for their subject one of the heroes of the world, and, by their feeble and shallow treatment of his character, tear the diadem from the brow that history has crowned, and brand themselves wicked iconoclasts; and if he studies our sentimental and melodramatic plays, he will realise that there is only one true tragedy to be observed nowadays in our theatres, and that is the audience which goes in its thousands to see a modern comedy.

For, after all, what kind of life is it that the more abandoned of our novelists and dramatists mirror so faithfully? Can such reproductions of petty social aspects in truth be said to deal with life at all? The shallow hedonism and somewhat undignified luxury of that chosen band which has been described as consisting of "those dreadful people whose names are always in the papers," may conceal, but cannot kill the old virtues of courage and kindness, and the men who apparently live only for pleasure are not afraid to die for their country. Beneath the dull conventionality and petty ideals of our mighty middle classes the eternal passions are latent but not lost; love and death cannot be lived down, and our hearts are still the fields where good and evil, desire and restraint, selfishness and altruism, wage their ancient warfare. But the novel of society and the *bourgeois* comedy care for none of these things, and are callously content to reproduce the vapid atmosphere of unimportant cliques and fleeting fashions. They ignore the body in

their study of its garments; they forget man in their careful investigation of his manners.

Our life has become a conflict of ceaseless activities. The national struggle for mercantile supremacy is mimicked in miniature by the individual struggle for wealth, and our children are taught both by example and by precept that the first duty of man is to acquire a large income. But though such an epoch of competition may foster the excellent qualities of swiftness and shrewdness, it can scarcely be considered amenable to the growth of the contemplative spirit; and it is contemplation, the child of a restful period, that is the parent of art. It was the age of Pericles which saw the sculptors chisel the honey-pale marble of Pentelican quarries into forms so perfect that the tooth of Time and the vandalism of Ottoman and Venetian were alike powerless to destroy their majesty; and our own golden epoch came to us when England was comparatively tranquil in the confidence of her newly-discovered strength. But in these more complex days we are always face to face with the actual; we are beset every moment with questions of utility and gain; we hurry hither and thither with our eyes cast on the ground and our mind fixed on the unimportant; our lips are wan with the worship of false gods, and sleek prosperity sits in the inmost shrine of our temples. We are so active that we never have time to think, or so torpid that we cannot even dream. We have conquered the seas, no doubt, but have we not lost some sense of their beauty? We build our palaces upon the mountains, but do we ever look at the splendours of the sunset?

I do not wish to suggest that we should become a nation of æsthetes, and trick ourselves out in bilious

velvets ; I only plead that the love of the beautiful, which is as natural and sane a quality as the desire for food or warmth, should not be treated with scornful intolerance or hasty patronage. It is only by cultivating this almost vanished sense that we can create a white temple to which we may retire when weary of the grimy facts of life, or a palace of colossal passions and heroic actions, in whose contemplation we may forget the meanness that so often, alas, is our modern heritage. Not that I desire to sneer æsthetically at life ; life is still lovely, in spite of modernity. The former beauties of the world are with us yet ; the roses blossom in the length of the lanes, and the divine sunlight is on mountain and valley as of old ; but we fix our eyes on the ledger, and the feet of night steal unmarked across the hills, and the roses die unmourned. We are taught to laugh at philosophic hedonism, but are we not the most lamentably ludicrous of all ascetics ? It is good to play one's part in a complex civilisation, but it is good also to stand aside occasionally and meditate on the real value of the success that we seek, and on the renunciation which the search necessitates. There is little ignoble in our labours but the manner in which we approach them, and with the cultivation of the sense of beauty the commonplace and tiresome details of life will become fair once more ; we shall no longer regard existence from the point of view of a dubious stockbroker, but shall survey it with the quiet happiness of an athlete who contends in some mighty conflict for love of the fine exhilaration that his efforts give to him. Life will cease to be a trade and will become a fine art.

And after the revival of this lost

sense our readers will no longer be content with base truth to petty detail, and baser sentimentality which is true to nothing in the world. They will demand books that are beautiful ; for a novel, after all, should appeal, not to those who are stupidly curious concerning a period or a person, nor to those who delight in morality made palatable or obscenity clad in seductive garments, but to those who can appreciate the portrayal of humanity, freed from all unimportant atmosphere, and seen, glowing and vivid, with all its strength and all its weakness, through the illuminating lens of a great imagination. The ignoble army of the students of popular need will flee discomfited, for the popular need will be no longer theirs to gratify, and the work of those who followed the lonely path of beauty will be appreciated at last. Art will not be conquered by science, as that amusing degenerate Dr. Max Nordau predicts, but will make even science lovely by withdrawing it from the dreary domain of pedantic specialists.

And when that perfect period dawns, and our journalists, harmless at last, sell daffodils and pipe on slender reeds in Fleet Street, and no one will write about art because everyone will be an artist, some gentle antiquary who has discovered this essay in the dusty archives of the British Museum will return smiling to his study, and will contemplate the shelf on which are ranged, in mutually glorious proximity, the works of William Shakespeare, Anthony Hope, John Milton, and Lucas Malet. It is easy to imagine the peculiar scorn of his smile ; but then, after all, he will be only an antiquary.

ST. JOHN LUCAS.

THE ROMANCE OF VIRGINIA.

AMERICAN novelists appear suddenly to have realised the picturesqueness of early American history, of the days when America was not yet American. From Mr. Allen's *CHOIR INVISIBLE* onward there has been a succession of books describing the life of civilisation set in a wilderness; not so much the existence of military outposts, of trappers and backwoodsmen which Cooper made his own, as the life of settlers, tillers of the soil in a country still virgin. And among all these books none have been more remarkable than those written by a lady who is, we are told, still quite young,—Miss Mary Johnston. Her three novels, *THE OLD DOMINION*, *BY ORDER OF THE COMPANY*, and *AUDREY* show a very surprising range of knowledge and invention. In one respect indeed she is wisely limited: she writes always of the State that she knows best, Virginia of the rich tobacco-bearing levels, of the deep forests and the winding creeks; but she writes of it at various stages of its eventful history, from the days of Captain John Smith and Pocahontas, Sir Edwyn Sandys and his Company, when Englishmen precariously held a foothold about the river-mouths, down to the prosperous and settled time before grave trouble had yet arisen between the mother-country and her offshoots,—the time when a Virginian gentry rivalled the fashions and the sports of English noblemen and squires, and sent their sons across the Atlantic for college training.

The subject naturally abounds in contrast: civilisation beside savagery,

tilled land beside forest, races set in juxtaposition, black, red, and white; and all of these contrasts Miss Johnston draws out most skilfully, as others have done before her. It abounds in beauty too, in occasions to suggest a picture; and by these also Miss Johnston profits, as she profits by the opening for violent incidents of Indian warfare, the old romance of a hidden or a followed trail. Yet in all these things she has had forerunners and must recal a comparison, which indeed she is well able to support. But her essential originality lies in her developing of a factor which others had overlooked,—the presence in this strangely situated community of white men and women sold into slavery. That was the central idea of her first book, *THE OLD DOMINION*, and a moment's thought shows how rich a vein of possibilities she had struck. Placing her story in the reign of Charles the Second, she had a Virginia already fully established in prosperity; a generation of rich planters, lords of the soil, working their estates with labour drawn from three classes,—from the African negro, from the convicted criminals of England, and lastly from the transported political prisoners, Commonwealth men punished after the Restoration. Add to this, in Virginia itself, among the landed proprietors, a certain element of persons who had willingly submitted to the Commonwealth's rule and accepted Republican principles. Any and every society of slave-owners sits on a volcano; here the eruption was daily menacing, and a servile

insurrection might have one of two characters. It might be the mere outbreak of wild beasts half domesticated, or it might be the calculated political uprising of men who ten years earlier had been the rulers of England. And Miss Johnston shows a fraction of this society threatened simultaneously by both perils, and saved by the opposition of one underground force to the other.

Her hero, Godfrey Landless, is a connecting link between the two classes of white servants. Son to a man who was Cromwell's friend, and himself one of the victors at Worcester, he is nevertheless not a political outlaw; he has been sentenced, wrongfully, for forgery, and he comes to the colony with a shipload of the refuse from English gaols. Purchased in Jamestown by Colonel Verney,—“trader, planter, magistrate, member of the Council of State, soldier, author on occasion, and fine gentleman all rolled into one after the fashion of the time”—Landless comes to Verney Manor, the great house looking on to Chesapeake Bay, in a sloop whose arrival Mistress Patricia Verney stands expecting, for it brings boxes from London with new dresses. With Miss Verney is her cousin, Sir Charles Carew, the associate of Sedley and Roscommon, who thinks to repair his gaming losses by a marriage to beauty and hogsheads of tobacco; and Sir Charles has come by the ship that brought the cargo of convicts, and has on the voyage noticed the man who had seen better days, and made it a pleasure to bait him. These are, in first outline, the elements of the drama; others fall quickly into place. With Landless come two other convict servants, purchased also by Colonel Verney, one a thief, the other a cut-throat; and the three are flung into a great body of men likewise situated on the plantation.

Landless, working on the tobacco-plants under a glaring sun, sees a big Indian bitten by a snake, sucks the wound which the Indian's own lips cannot reach, and makes a friend, before the overseer's lash falls on him, for the first time. Then, as he still quivers from resentment, he hears himself addressed by the next worker. Here is a vivid sketch of the figure that his eyes fall on.

Upon a skeleton of extraordinary height was set a head bare of any hair. Scalp, forehead and cheeks were of one dull, ivory hue like an eastern carving. Upon the smooth, dead surface of the right cheek sprawled a great red R, branded into the flesh, and through each large protruding ear went a ragged hole. For the rest, the lips were of iron, and the small, deep-set eyes were so bright and burning that they gave the impression that they were red like the great letter. It might have been the face of a man of sixty years, though it would have been hard to tell wherein lay the semblance of age, so smooth was the skin and so brilliant the eyes.

This personage, bearing on his body the sign of so many thwarted attempts to escape, is a Muggletonian fanatic, whose purpose to be free is unshaken but whose plan is altered. He it is who brings Landless by night to the hut of another servant, a dreamer of dreams and plotter of plots, the centre of a great conspiracy among the Oliverians and victims of the Act of Uniformity to establish a Republic in Virginia. And this conspiracy can only succeed by leaguings itself with an insurrection of the slaves. Godwyn, the dreamer and plotter, is confident that the God-fearing men, Oliverians and religious martyrs, will be strong enough to hold in the rabble they lead. But Landless doubts; he shrinks from the chances of such a hell let loose, and all Godwyn's entreaty cannot prevail on him to join. But a few days later

he is in Verney's house, employed as a scribe in the absence of a recognised secretary; and writing in a screened corner of the library he is the unwilling witness to Patricia's rejection of Sir Charles Carew before his presence is detected. Then follows a scene where the free man taunts the convict, till a blow answers the insult. Two days later Landless comes to Godwyn's hut, his back scarred from the lash, and gives in his adherence to the conspiracy.

The plot which follows is too intricate to detail; the cardinal point is that Godwyn is murdered in his hut for the sake of treasure stored there, and Landless succeeds to the leadership. But among the conspirators is one, a mulatto, who has other purposes and is designing an outbreak of slaves and felons leagued with the Indians of the backwoods. His scheme is to let the Oliverians and the masters cripple each other, and then come down on the spoil; but at the eleventh hour the Oliverian plot is discovered. Patricia Verney, led by a mad girl, overhears the plotters at their rendezvous and finds that Landless, who has saved her from drowning and of whose innocence she has become convinced, is their leader. By her adroitness the plotters are seized and Landless is a prisoner in Verney Manor when he learns that the slaves' outbreak is imminent. Securing a promise of pardon for all but himself, he enlists the Oliverians to defend the house, and a great fight follows in which the slaves and their Indian allies are driven back; but in the *mêlée* Patricia is seized and carried off by the mulatto and his redskins. Pursuit follows; Landless, refused a part in it, escapes, and sets out lone-handed, but is joined by the Iroquois whom he had saved from snake-poison. The rest of the story, —how he and the Indian caught up

the trail, rescued the girl, and were in turn pursued—up to the catastrophe pathetic rather than tragic, is excellent reading, and very astonishing writing to come from a young lady. If it be true, as we have heard, that the writer is not only a lady but an invalid, it is the more surprising that she should create such vivid scenes of physical hardship and rude forest adventure.

In her second volume, — which leaped at once into one of those enormous successes of which America provides the possibility—Miss Johnston again struck on a very good historic suggestion. Her heroine comes to Virginia with the cargo of "poor maids" whom Sir Edwin Sandys shipped off to provide wives for the newly established settlers. But the Lady Jocelyn Leigh is a bird of other feather than the rest. A ward of James the First, and by him promised in marriage to his favourite, Lord Carnal, she has seized the only chance of escape; and the man who has asked and taken her in marriage is a gentleman of family, a Percy of Northumberland, but of no influence at court. Nor can the Governor, however well disposed, back him in resistance, when Lord Carnal follows in a ship of war to claim the lady, for the Company depends on the King. Delay, however, is possible, and the matter is referred back to England. During the delay there occur strange and hairbreadth escapes from kidnapping, from poisoning, and the like. But at last the King's mandate comes and Percy, denied justice, makes to escape with his wife. Then follows a series of wildly fantastic adventures on board a pirate-ship, ending with the return of all the chief personages to the Colony. In their absence trouble has been brewing, and the book ends with a fine description of Indian revolt. Opechancanough, the treacher-

ous emperor of the tribes, is strongly drawn, and a figure still more impressive is that of Nantauquas, his kinsman, who has loyally accepted civilisation and lived as a friend among the white men, but now at the last, when it comes to open war, joins with his own people, after warning his friends in the other camp. The whole story, if melodramatic, is throughout strongly and picturesquely wrought; the personages stand boldly out, and pervading the whole is a real sense of beauty. It would be hard to better the scene where Nantauquas arrives in time to rescue Captain Percy and his man from the stakes where they are tied, and declares to the baffled Indians that he, the son of Powhatan, has now been reconciled to Opechancanough and speaks with the voice of the house-royal. And the following pages, which tell how Opechancanough himself detained the two white men, hiding treacherous intent under a show of ceremonious rejoicing and wild festival, fully maintain the high pitch at which the incident has been set. Of all the savage peoples with whom the unrolling map has brought Englishmen into contact none have been so romantic as the Red Indians. Equal to the Maories in eloquence and in bravery, they have surpassed them in terror. In plain truth, once armed, they have been a match for the European, and were subdued eventually by firewater rather than by the rifle. And Miss Johnston has known how to avail herself to the full of the opportunities afforded by their treachery, their fidelity, their cruelty, and their valour.

In the last of her books, however, she dispenses with this element of romance. The Indian still figures there, but only the half-breed, endowed with the vices of both bloods, contemptible, yet still dangerous.

She dispenses also with the aid of arbitrary adventure, and though she still writes romance it is the romance of character, of love and hate that finds no outlet in violent action till the tragic close. But Audrey, the girl who gives her name to the book, is a figure of pure romance, and the dawn of womanhood in her is beautifully rendered. Her story is this. The company of gentlemen adventurers who set out with Governor Spotswood to explore the Blue Mountains and earn his badge of the Golden Horseshoe, fell upon a cabin in a valley, where lived a pioneer, his wife, and two daughters, one a mere child. The pretty face of the elder daughter tempted one of the adventurers, Marmaduke Haward, from his quest, and after a few hours' riding he turned feigning a lameness. Losing the trail, he and his negro wandered all night seeking the cabin, and when they found it, flames guided them. Indians had passed there, and the only living creature left was the little girl cowering in the grass. Haward took her home, riding long days through the forest, and left her with the minister of his parish, providing money for her maintenance. He himself went to England and forgot her.

Ten years later, in the last days of George the First, he came back, and appeared at a May-day merry-making, squiring the beautiful Mistress Evelyn Byrd whom he designed to marry. Evelyn Byrd gave away the prizes, and she gave a guinea to the light-heeled lass known as Darden's Audrey who won the foot-race. Coming home in her coach through the woods, she refused to marry Haward because he did not love her,—and because she loved him. Haward, vexed at the rebuff, went home, found his store kept by an exiled Jacobite, flotsam from the field of Preston, and his

library tenanted by a tippling school-master with branded palms. On the next morning he bethought him to visit the parsonage, and Audrey. It was in a nest of her own, sheltered among trees, away from the drunken parson and his shrew of a wife, that Haward found her, sitting like a Dryad. He found a girl who had made of her unknown half-remembered benefactor a hero and something of a saint; a girl with the imagination developed by books, for the drunken parson and the thievish schoolmaster were both scholars, and had taught a willing pupil; and lastly, a girl who saw in him the refuge from hardship, rough blows, and hateful courtship. And he, living lazily through a Virginian summer, finds immense content in the society of this imaginative child who comes to him among the flowers of his garden, worships him, talks to him, and reads to him with a surprising talent for rendering the passion of verse. So the idyll goes on, while outside its charmed circle rage other actors,—Jean Hugon, the drunken cross-breed, half Indian half Huguenot, whose mind is set on winning Audrey; and the beautiful Evelyn Byrd, who waits in her father's house for the promised visit from the man who has declared that he will urge his suit again. To Audrey Evelyn is the princess in a story, who must naturally crown the fortunes of her wonderful prince; to Evelyn Audrey is a minx and a wanton. Finally the outside actors break in on the idyll. Hugon plots to murder Haward by the help of a rope across the road, as he rides home at "the planter's pace." Audrey learns the plot and runs to stop the rider; but Haward comes in company with Colonel Byrd, who checks his desire to push on and ride down the ambush. So, taking another road for home, Haward sets the girl behind him still tense with the strain of danger.

The passage which follows is a good example of Miss Johnston's writing.

The lightning was about them, and they raced to the booming of the thunder. Heavy raindrops began to fall, and the wind was a power to drive the riders on. Its voice shrilled above the diapason of the thunder; the forest swung to its long cry. When the horses turned from the wide into the narrow road, they could no longer go abreast. Mirza took the lead, and the bay fell a length behind. The branches now hid the sky; between the flashes there was Stygian gloom, but when the lightning came it showed far aisles of the forest. There was the smell of rain upon dusty earth, there was the wine of coolness after heat, there was the sense of being borne upon the wind, there was the leaping of life within the veins to meet the awakened life without. Audrey closed her eyes, and wished to ride thus for ever. Haward, too, travelling fast through mist and rain a road whose end was hidden, facing the wet wind, hearing the voices of earth and sky, felt his spirit mount with the mounting voices. So to ride with Love to doom! On, and on, and on! Left behind the sophist, the apologist, the lover of the world with his tinsel that was not gold, his pebbles that were not gems! Only the man thundering on—the man and his mate that was meant for him since time began! He raised his face to the strife above, he drew his breath, his hand closed over the hand of the woman riding with him. At the touch a thrill ran through them both; had the lightning with a sword of flame cut the world from beneath their feet, they had passed on, immortal in their happiness. But the bolts struck aimlessly, and the moment fled. Haward was Haward again; he recognised his old acquaintance with a half-humorous half disdainful smile. The road was no longer a road that gleamed athwart all time and space; the wind had lost its trumpet tone; Love spoke not in the thunder, nor seemed so high a thing as the lit heaven. Audrey's hand was yet within his clasp; but it was flesh and blood that he touched, not spirit, and he was glad that it was so. For her, her cheeks burned, and she hid her eyes. She had looked unawares, as by the lightning glare, into a world of which she had not dreamed. Its portals had shut; she rode on in the twilight again, and she could not clearly remember what she had seen.

But she was sure that the air of that country was sweet, she was faint with its beauty, her heart beat with violence to its far echoes. Moreover, she was dimly aware that in the moment when she had looked there had been a baptism. She had thought of herself as a child, as a girl; now and for evermore she was a woman.

That ends the idyll. Colonel Byrd that night puts his interpretation openly on Haward's relations with the girl; and Haward, man of the world, with his own designs on life, his own doubts of the rôle of King Cophetua, goes with Colonel Byrd to Westover as Evelyn's suitor. When he meets Audrey again, it is not in his home or hers, but at Williamsburgh, when the whole colony is gathered to welcome a new Governor, and to attend his first ball. Audrey is there as the guest of some players, acquaintances of Mistress Darden's, Haward as one of the chief gentlemen in Virginia, the glass of colonial fashion. Throughout the book, which is a novel of character not of incident, much turns on the drawing of this man; brave, honourable, gifted, successful in many ways, yet essentially discontented with life; a man who can fill without effort the admirable position assigned to him, whose existence does not give full play to his personality. Audrey wakens in him something that apart from her does not stir; she gives him a wider range and keener emotions. And the meeting with her augments his distaste for the ceremonial side of life; sickening already for a fever, he is indisposed to play his part of fine gentleman at the ball. A caprice sends him instead in his fine clothes to visit Audrey in the home of the players, and then another whim takes hold of him,—to array the girl in stage-trappings and take her with him to the ball. One need not follow out in detail the torments inflicted by

Evelyn Byrd, the virtuous lady, on her rival, the supposed wanton, nor all the agony of suffering which finally drives Audrey to seek shelter with the player-woman and to find her vocation on the stage. One need not speak of her reconciliation with Haward, her one hour of happiness, and the tragic triumph of her death. But through all these scenes the book keeps its charm and freshness of suggestion with a real touch of imaginative and romantic portraiture.

To praise Miss Johnston's work in its broader aspect, as a picture of the most picturesque among the American colonies in days when Virginia had a courtly charm that has never wholly departed from the Southern States, it will be enough to say that the reader will have no cause for resentment when he finds in these pages the names (and no more) of Colonel Esmond from the Virginian Castlewood. It would be of course unreasonable to suggest any comparison between this young authoress and the creation of *ESMOND*; yet this at least Miss Johnston has in common with Thackeray, a fine sense of fitness in adapting the diction of her characters to their period. She steers adroitly between the Scylla of pedantry and the Charybdis of anachronism. This is the more commendable because the modern novelist is apt to fancy that an effect of energy is produced by putting the slang of to-day into the mouth of some one presumed to have existed centuries ago. Take for example Mr. R. W. Chambers, a writer of considerable talent who is doing in his last book *CARDIGAN* precisely the sort of thing that Miss Johnston did before him. One idiom indeed which recurs repeatedly throughout *CARDIGAN* might as well belong to the eighteenth as the twentieth century, being equally strange to us in either, the use of the verb *conduct*

as equivalent to *behave*. "Felicity, will you promise to conduct as becomes your station?" But the point we have to make touches rather such a passage as follows:

"Where is your mate?" asked Rolfe anxiously.

"Hiram? Full of war-arrows t'other side of Crown Gap."

"Scalped?" asked Rolfe in a low tone.

"I reckon he is. He never knowed nothing after the third arrow. Them Wyandottes done it."

"You orter be glad you got through, Ben Pince," said Rolfe grimly.

"I am—drat that boy! where's my beer? Gimme the pot and quit gaping. Hain't you never seed a express before?"

This in a book where the characters, of George the Third's time, are frequently made to speak in a stilted English more suggestive of Commonwealth days. From such defects of workmanship Miss Johnston is free. But better than her lack of defects is her positive quality of imagination, of invention,—in a word, of romance.

OUR HOLD ON SOUTH AFRICA AFTER THE WAR.

IN dealing with the question of securing our hold on South Africa after the war it is not my intention to enter into any controversy of a party character. Both political parties,—those of the Government and of the late Government—are agreed that we must maintain our hold on South Africa if the Empire is to continue to exist. Even our Continental critics, who devote so much of their attention to our affairs, and exhibit so much of vicarious humanitarianism in their criticism of our conduct in the war, admit that the Empire is entitled to regard its existence as legitimate, and that we are not quite to be ranked in the category of the pirate States of Barbary—*hostes humani generis*. We must be thankful for such small mercies.

The Progressive party among the burghers of the two Republics in Pretoria and Bloemfontein, with whom I was associated for some years, recognised in full the legitimacy of the existence of the Empire, its beneficent mission in carrying the banner of justice and humanity through Africa; but much more than that, they recognised their duty of co-operating with the policy of the Imperial Power which guarded the seas and kept the peace of South Africa for all its inhabitants, whether British or Dutch, German, French, or of Huguenot descent. The policy of that Progressive party was to welcome all European immigrants as equals, and, following in the footsteps of Sir John Brand, President of the Orange Free State for twenty-five years, to build up in the Republics of the Vaal

and the Orange River a great State, destined to fuse in a confederation all South Africa under Imperial protection and guidance.

We must all regret that the wise and enlightened principles of this party were not followed. It casts a deep gloom of tragedy over the present prolonged struggle to reflect that, as Lord Kitchener has pointed out in a recent despatch to President Steyn, the leaders of that party of progress and enlightenment are among the most gallant of our opponents in the field, deeming it their duty when war came,—a war they had opposed—to take sides with their own people. This is a sentiment which we can heartily wish were more widely felt in the United Kingdom.

For the purposes, therefore, of excluding from our consideration all pending controversies which might have a bearing on party politics, I do not propose to consider here any question of negotiation with the enemy before the end of the war, or any steps, legislative or administrative, to be taken by the civil or military authorities before peace is restored. For the same reason I propose to omit any consideration of the wide question of re-organising naval or military administration at home; not so much because these are necessarily, or, indeed, usually, associated with party politics, as that they affect the stability and the general defence of the Empire all over the world, and not South Africa in any greater degree than Canada, Australia, or India.

The conditions of the problem,

therefore, of retaining our hold on South Africa after the war,—limited in the manner I have already described by the elimination of questions lending themselves to party politics, or to questions affecting the general welfare and safety of the Empire, and not of South Africa alone—may briefly be stated to be concerned with a consideration of the relative numbers and military efficiency of the Boer and the British population at the present moment, and for a generation to come.

Let us first consider the relative numbers of the Boer and British population. Roughly speaking, the Boer population in South Africa, taking all the Colonies together, from the Zambesi to the sea, number about 350,000; the British-descended population number less than 300,000. That disproportion itself is formidable, but it becomes more so when attention is paid to the rapid increase of the Boer population. Precisely as the Germans predict their future supremacy over France as a result of their rapidly increasing numbers, so do the Boers look forward to a time when, by sheer weight of numbers, their influence will become predominant among the European population of South Africa. To illustrate this proportionate increase, it is sufficient to recall the fact that in 1898 a Bill was introduced into the Transvaal Volksraad on lines such as those of the recent legislation of the French Assembly and the ancient legislation of the later Roman Empire. This Bill provided that burghers with large families should be assisted by the grant of a farm at the expense of the State. A large family was defined to mean one consisting of more than twelve sons capable of bearing arms for the Republic.

We have next to consider the probable attitude of the Boer people

towards British administration and their British fellow-citizens. To put it briefly, I may say that, after a long association with and intimate knowledge of the Boer people, their attitude will be determined by the numbers and the military efficiency of the mass of the British civilian population. No Government relying merely on the protection of a professional army will ever be regarded by the Boers as other than a temporary military domination. One of the chief causes of the war was the contempt felt by the Boers for the average British civilian, who did not know how to ride a horse or to use a rifle, to measure distances with his eye, or to take cover. Incidentally, perhaps, there was much that was reasonable in this attitude of mind, having regard to the presence in South Africa of overwhelming masses of a subject-race, outnumbering the European by ten to one, whose subordination must necessarily depend in the long run on the possession by the Europeans of commanding military force.

There is also to be remembered the stubborn and resolute character of the Boer people,—the descendants of the Hollanders who fought against Alva at the fortress of Briel, of the French Huguenots who followed Henry of Navarre at Ivry, and of the German peasant who gathered spears at Sem-pach. Their religious fanaticism will last for our time and generation; their conviction that they are the Lord's elect, and that His sword will smite not in vain, will continue. So will continue their estimation of British inconsistency,—the unfortunate heritage of our well-meaning but vacillating policy, blown about by every wind of party. They will still, and for our time, continue to hope that one Imperial administration will reverse the acts of its predecessor.

Paardeberg has clouded, but not extinguished, the memory of Majuba Hill.

Another factor in the situation, to be steadily borne in mind, is the absolute impossibility of disarming the Boers. Many rash suggestions to this effect have been made in the colonial and home press, such as that the Boers should only be allowed to carry shot-guns or sporting rifles. Anyone who takes the trouble to realise either the physical or social conditions of the country will see that to carry out these suggestions would be as impolitic as impracticable. It is a sheer necessity of life that every European in a community overshadowed by an overwhelming Kaffir majority of ten to one should be armed; neither life nor property would be safe otherwise. It may surprise some home-staying Britons to learn that in Bulawayo, Johannesburg, and other places, women's revolver-clubs have been formed. Besides this consideration, it is also to be remembered that it would be physically impossible to restrict the Boers to the possession of shot-guns and sporting rifles. On account of the length of the frontier of the new Colonies, the vastness of the territory, and the facilities for concealing arms and ammunition, gun-running could not be checked from the German and Portuguese border. So long as a farmer is willing to give £25 in money or money's worth for a rifle which can be bought for £5 in Hamburg, commercial enterprise may be relied upon to blend profit with a patriotic blow at perfidious Albion.

Let us next consider the present condition of the British civilian population. The British-descended colonists are usually good shots and scouts if brought up in the country. This is especially the case among the English-speaking farmers in the Eastern Colony, but not necessarily so with

regard to the British residents in the coast towns, although during the war the formation of Town Guards has somewhat modified this condition.

The case of the British immigrant stands, of course, on an entirely different footing. Owing to well-known historical causes,—chiefly the insular position of the United Kingdom, the British reliance on the Navy, the organisation of the professional Army by George the Third, the growth of industrialism, and the herding of the people in the great towns—the British people have become disarmed, without realising the enormous political consequences of this unconscious step, more especially on our action and prestige abroad. That some of the dangers of this position are being realised is becoming evident from, among other things, Lord Salisbury's call to learn the use of arms, through the formation of rifle clubs, issued to the civilian population at home.

Among both of these classes, the South African born and British immigrant, the birth-rate is not so high as among the Boers. Among the Boers a large family means that the head of the family is a person of considerable importance and power in the community, as all his sons are capable of acquiring, and usually do acquire, farms. The Bywoner class (the sub-tenants on the farm of another), is a recent growth in the Republics, and, be it said in passing, an ominous and significant one, due, as regards the late Republics, to the stoppage of the *trek* by Mr. Cecil Rhodes's annexation of Rhodesia, and elsewhere partly to the Roman-Dutch law of equal partition of land among co-heirs, and partly to the absence of a Homestead Exemption Act preventing farmers being expropriated for debt. Possibly the newer economic conditions arising from residence in the vast, undeveloped

country of South Africa may lead to an increase in the birth-rate of the British-descended colonists and of the British immigrant; but no certain reliance can be placed on this anticipation, since we can see by reference to Australian experience that a most regrettable tendency in the other direction is noticeable. Taking present factors as constant, it is clear, therefore, that within the present generation the Boer majority will become overwhelming, unless direct Imperial action be taken to prevent it. Such action can only take the form of the active promotion by the State of immigration from home and the British Colonies. This leads us to the consideration of the question whether the presence of a British civilian population is essential to the retention of the Imperial hold on South Africa.

It will appear to anyone who dispassionately considers the subject that it is impossible to retain our South African dominion by relying exclusively on the services of professional soldiers, whether of the Imperial Army, or of local corps such as the South African Constabulary. In the first place, the enormous cost is to be considered. A corps of 25,000 men, such as the South African Constabulary under Major-General Baden-Powell, receiving pay at the rate of five shillings per day, will cost £2,000,000 a year; 100,000 paid at the same rate would need £8,000,000 a year. Now, with respect to the incidence of taxation necessary to raise such enormous sums, two dangers have specially to be guarded against,—one political, the other economic, in character. If all or most of such taxation be levied on the British taxpayer at home, we must expect to encounter not alone active opposition to the levying, which might end in lowering the efficiency of

the Imperial Army as regards numbers or equipment, but also further vacillation in the Imperial policy, leading to ill-judged attempts to conciliate the irreconcilables in South Africa, with the object of reducing the military expenditure. An opponent of the Imperial policy has been good enough to place on record his opinion that, when the income-tax is two shillings in the pound, there will be a good many pro-Boers in England. Without sharing in this opinion,—the Empire has shown its readiness to sacrifice untold millions in the prosecution of this war—it is still our duty to remember that it would be unwise to render the retention of the Empire in South Africa unpopular on account of the excessive taxation involved in its maintenance.

If it be said, on the other hand, that it would be unnecessary, in order to uphold a large standing army in South Africa, to resort to the purses of the British taxpayers, and that the gold mines of the Transvaal present a readier, and indeed inexhaustible, source from which to draw, it must be pointed out that the present output of those mines is by no means an inexhaustible source to provide for taxation, amounting as it does to £11,000,000 a year, taxed to the amount of £4,000,000; and if the taxation were increased to a point which would not allow of returns to shareholders, the mines would cease to be worked. Another, and equally important consideration is this, that an unduly heavy taxation on the output would check the development of hitherto unworked gold-areas—a matter the importance of which cannot be exaggerated. It is well-known that there are enormous tracts of undeveloped mineral-bearing areas throughout the Transvaal.

We are, therefore, forced to see that, relying solely on a professional

army to retain South Africa by military force is impracticable; and, as military force is absolutely essential in the face of the anticipated opposition of the Boers, we are led to the conclusion that the only method of retaining our armed hold is to encourage and organise immigration from home and the Colonies, and to procure the universal arming of all British colonists.

To equalise the proportion of British and Dutch-descended inhabitants in South Africa, it is essential to establish a British Board of State-aided immigration of those destined to settle on the land as agriculturists. For the purposes of the immigration of the urban and industrial population, State interference is hardly necessary; the inducement of high wages to be obtained at the mines, and in connection with the various trades and industries in the towns, will prove an amply sufficient attraction, without any form of artificial encouragement. But it is different in the case of agriculturists. The isolated individuals who usually emigrate of themselves have not, as a rule, the capital wherewith to purchase the land for agricultural cultivation, nor the skill to select it, nor the information as to the conditions necessary to successful farming, having regard to the exceptional plagues which harass the South African farmer, such as locusts, horse-sickness, and rinderpest. Information on all these subjects can easily be collected and distributed by a Board of Government experts.

Now, the political importance of settling as much of the British population on the land as possible is almost self-evident. A time must come, within a few short generations, when the gold of the Rand mines will be exhausted; and if, by that time, a considerable majority of the British farmers be not settled on the land,

we shall revert to the condition of things existing prior to 1881, and find the British population in a small minority as contrasted with the Boers; for, of course, with the disappearance of the gold the urban population will tend to disappear also. If, however, at present, while the large population of the mining cities exists to supply an immediate market for agricultural produce at the door, advantage be taken of this opportunity of settling the country with agriculturists, agriculture will have had a fair start before the gold can disappear.

The precedent of 1821 shows how successful as a political measure, and how free of ultimate cost to the Government, State-aided immigration to Africa may be. The Eastern Province of Cape Colony, the outcome of that scheme of immigration, affords the only example of a completely English-speaking community in South Africa. Any other policy than that of settling agricultural colonists on the new lands will simply end in leaving Johannesburg and Barberton so many Zimbabwe, with nothing left of the once thronged city but the hills of the blue-grey dust of the tailings and the hideous pits of the disused shafts. On the *veld* the Boer would flourish in unrestrained predominance; and, with the departure of the British urban population would disappear the British flag.

Several Commissions would need to be appointed to carry out this policy on a sufficiently large scale. A Land Commission in South Africa would be required to select land suitable for agriculture, much more of which is available than is generally supposed. The erroneous impression that the territories of the new Colonies contain little agricultural land is due to more causes than one. In the first place, as part of a political propaganda, this idea has been sedulously

spread with the object of checking British immigration. In the next, the Boers have never been agriculturists to any considerable extent, with the exception of the farms of what used to be known as the Conquered Territory in the Orange River Colony, being a portion of Basutoland, the granary of South Africa, annexed by the Orange Free State in 1869. Again, the British population has not taken to agriculture, being attracted by the high wages of the mines and the rapid fortunes to be made by speculation in them. Besides this, the adventurous spirits who are tempted to pioneer in new countries are rarely those to whom the quieter life and smaller profits of agriculture afford attractions. Then again, the total absence of irrigation-works on a large scale prevents great tracts of land being cultivable. Between the reef of the Witwatersrand and Johannesburg and the Magaliesberg mountain-range beyond Pretoria, a distance of forty miles, stretches a wide tract of land which only requires irrigation to bloom like a garden. In this tract, immediately to the north of Johannesburg, stands an extensive wood, miles in circumference, called the Sachsenwald, only nine or ten years old, the trees in which have acquired a growth which, I am informed, would require thirty years in England.

As to the land to be selected, there are very considerable districts not in the hands of Boer farmers. These consist, on the one hand, of Government land, with which, of course, the Land Commission could immediately deal, and, on the other, tracts in the possession of various land-companies with whom arrangements could be entered into by the Government. It is to be remembered that in the case of any difficulty being found in fixing reasonable terms for such transfers,

though there is hardly any reason to anticipate such a contingency, there is always the reserve legislative power of the Government, such as has been exercised in Australia and New Zealand, to provide for the resumption of uncultivated lands into the hands of the State from which the land had been originally acquired.

Another Commission would be required,—an Immigration Board to sit in England—for the purpose of selecting suitable families to be transported to Africa. Associated with this, agricultural training-colleges would be also necessary; and an incidental advantage of this would of course be the relieving of the congested population of many of the cities.

Personally I should be in favour of founding agricultural villages in South Africa, with general powers of supervision over agricultural methods. With this system the Boers are already familiar, in the case of agriculture conducted on the lands of the townships. Besides ensuring uniformity of cultivation and the adoption of improved methods of farming, this would also act as a great stimulus to immigration, by preventing the isolation and dulness which are the chief deterrents to the adoption of the life of a farmer. In an excellent book by Mr. W. Bleloch, of Johannesburg, this matter of village cultivation is considered.

There is less necessity for entering at length into the formation of an Irrigation Board, as it has been already announced that such a Board has been formed in the new Colonies, and that steps have been taken to organise an extensive system. It is fortunate that in the expert service of India and Egypt the Government of the new Colonies has material to draw upon wherefrom to obtain the soundest advice, and officials of wide experience.

In advocating the universal arming of all British colonists in South Africa—of the whole civilian white population—it will be seen that I have confined myself to considerations peculiarly affecting South Africa as an integral portion of the Empire. Lord Salisbury's call to civilians of the Empire to learn the use of arms, if our existence is to be maintained, of course lends additional weight to these considerations, peculiarly affecting a country containing a large and disaffected minority of Europeans and such an overwhelming number of the subject race. No serious politician ever dreams that the training of every citizen of the Empire to be a good rifle-shot in the least diminishes the importance of maintaining our command of the seas by the Imperial Navy, and, as our second line of defence, an efficient and highly-trained Army. No one imagines that a million of civilian rifles would, in actual warfare, unless directed by professionally trained soldiers, be other than Prince Bismarck's "mob of men with guns." Indeed, one of the most urgent questions of the hour, as soldiers and sailors, I understand, are generally agreed, is the raising to the highest pitch of proficiency the professional training of officers of the Imperial Army,—the rendering the profession in every respect the serious, absorbing, and life-long pursuit of those citizens who elect to follow that method of serving the State. And, of course, in the furtherance of that end, the widening of the sphere of selection on which the State can draw, by increased pay, and in other ways, creating that *carrière ouverte aux talents* which placed at the disposal of Napoleon the First the materials for his wonderful corps of officers.

For South Africa, therefore, I would advocate the appointing of a

Commission to be specially charged with the arming of all British colonists. Volunteer corps are at present, it is announced, being organised out of the Imperial Light Horse and the other irregular corps who have vindicated from Elandslaagte to Mafeking, from Paardeberg to Pretoria, the high courage of the Uitlanders of Johannesburg. But, besides this, the organisation of rifle-clubs, on the model suggested by Lord Salisbury, is quite feasible for all the civilian population of the towns of Johannesburg, Barberton, and the other mining centres, and is in fact much more easy of accomplishment than in England. On the *veld* there would be no difficulty in procuring rifle-ranges of sufficient size; and it will not be necessary to use Morris Tubes.

As a prelude to this training of the adult population, cadet corps should be organised in all schools. It is to be remembered that every Boer boy of fourteen is counted as a soldier, under the command of the field-cornet of his district.

Of course, all these measures I have advocated must necessarily proceed on the Boer model, rifles and ammunition being provided free of charge by the State. Obviously, also, competitions should be organised, and prizes offered to stimulate the maintenance of efficiency.

The revision of the laws of the two late Republics is a subject which covers a very wide field, and one on which very much might be said; but hardly with immediate relevance to the question with which I am mainly dealing, namely, that of British immigration. On some future occasion I hope to deal with the whole subject comprehensively; but what I here wish to point out is that all the laws of the two Republics, in accordance with our invariable practice when acquiring new territories, whether by

conquest or cession, remain in force until they are repealed.

Now, many of these laws are intentionally framed to exclude British immigration, even though that is not their apparent purpose. Furthermore, a deliberate omission to enact laws has often been dictated by precisely the same motive.

To take an instance of the former category of laws. The Gold Law of the Transvaal Republic is so framed that, without making any reference to British immigration, it is calculated to exclude it. The policy of the law, while apparently only aiming at securing the revenue of the State, is really calculated to throw the ownership of the mining areas into as few hands as possible. The policy of the ruling class was to make the Uitlander European population as small as possible. Take, for instance, the taxing of the mining claims. Mining claims were obliged to pay a tax, whether they were being worked or not. This, at first sight, appears equitable enough; yet, if this taxation had been adjusted to the actual output, while the revenue of the State would have been as great or greater, the number of European immigrants holding mining properties would have been vastly increased.

In this manner the law worked. As the tax on the mining claims had to be paid whether they were being worked or not, the result was that in times of depression the poorer holders,—in many cases the actual discoverers of the mine—became unable to pay these dues; and consequently, under the law, the property lapsed to the State. What, then, became of those claims? Under the law they were obliged to be put up to auction and sold to the highest bidder. In times of commercial depression necessarily the highest bidders, and indeed the only bidders,

must be the great financial corporations, already in possession of large mining areas. In this way so many possible British rifles were being steadily excluded. But, it may be asked, why could not the poorer claim-holders dispose of their claims in times of prosperity, and before times of depression came? The answer is simple: in all the financial centres of Europe, the incidence of the Boer Gold Law was perfectly understood; and financiers, knowing that the properties were in the hands of the poorer men, would either refuse to buy at all, waiting for times of depression, or else compel the seller to dispose of his claims at their own price, it may be at one-twentieth part of their value, being well aware that time was running against him, and that he was in reality selling in a forced market. If the Boer law were otherwise, and the tax was levied on the gold-output and not on the claims, the financiers would know that time was not running against the poorer vendor, and that he could not be forced to sell at a loss by waiting for times of depression.

Thus, the object of the Boer Gold Law to exclude British immigration was effected, whether in times of prosperity or of depression.

Similarly, a deliberate abstention from proclaiming new gold-areas was a consequence of the law which left such proclamation in the hands of the Government, instead of allowing any prospector to acquire possession of gold-mines wherever he found them. Several districts in the Transvaal are known to be rich in minerals, and the proclamation of these districts has been steadily refused, with, of course, the same effect,—the checking of British immigration.

Other laws might be adduced in this connection; but it will here be sufficient to notice the Customs Law,

which, by raising unduly the price of the necessities of life, repressed the growth of the British urban population, while it had no effect on the Boer dwellers on the *veld*, who never wished to do more than raise the small quantities of agricultural produce which practically sufficed for their subsistence.

To ensure the carrying out of a thorough policy of consolidating the Imperial dominion in South Africa, and laying broad and deep its foundation, steps should be taken without delay to facilitate the formation of that Federation of South Africa which has been the object of so many Imperial statesmen in the past, and the record of which design furnishes us with such a warning as the names of Sir George Grey, Sir Philip Wodehouse, and Sir Bartle Frere, bring to our minds,—a record of Imperial vacillation, infirmity of purpose, and vicarious magnanimity.

On the general desirability of Federation in South Africa all parties, loyal to the Empire, are agreed. The only objection raised to the proposal being considered at the present time is the suggestion, made in some quarters, that we should wait until the various States of which South Africa is composed should voluntarily combine. To this objection I would reply that to wait for unanimity on this question is to relegate the solution of the problem to the unending future. Unanimity on a measure such as this, intended to strengthen the Imperial hold on South Africa, can never be anticipated by any man who understands fully the conditions of the various sections of the population.

In the first place, it is to be remembered that many of these territories, such as Basutoland and Bechuanaland, are Native Reserves; and that the vast subject native popu-

lation of 6,000,000 being unfit, and, as I believe, destined for ever to remain unfit, for representative institutions, cannot and should not be consulted at all. In the next place, it must be kept in mind that a very large section of the European population,—some people might say even half—of Boer blood and speech, are disaffected towards the Empire, and are not likely to acquiesce in any step intended to strengthen its hold; but, on the contrary, will make every endeavour to weaken it. Again, looking at the existing constitution of Cape Colony, and the large number of voters under the sway of the Afrikaner Bond, no consent of a Parliament, so largely representing anti-British sentiment that its sitting has had to be suspended during the war, can be expected in our time or generation. Interminable intrigues and ultimate rejection of the proposal might safely be counted on; exactly as the Federation scheme of Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Froude was rejected through Afrikaner influence. In the case of the loyal Colonies of Natal and Rhodesia, no difficulty need be anticipated.

On the other hand, supreme legislative power is now vested in the High Commissioner for South Africa. He governs in Basutoland through the Resident, who is his delegate, in the Orange River Colony through the Lieutenant-Governor, in Rhodesia through the Deputy High Commissioner, in the Transvaal directly as Governor. Legislation is exercised by proclamation of the High Commissioner. It is, therefore, clearly within his competence to create, by proclamation, a Council consisting of members from all the States and Territories of South Africa, in the first instance nominated; later on, when order is completely restored, and all parties in the community

have recognised the inevitable, the members might be wholly or partly elected.

It will be seen that I have not attempted exhaustive treatment of the various subjects here touched upon. Nor have I advocated British immigration, the arming of civilians, and the federation of South Africa as the sole measures needed to make our hold on South Africa secure. There are others, dealing with matters of moment, on which I have written elsewhere, and hope to write more fully in the future. Such are the necessity for the immediate formation of a thoroughly representative commission for the revision of the laws in the new colonies, especially the gold-laws, the compensation to be granted to the loyalist Uitlanders, the terms to be granted to the Boer burghers (captured, surrendered, or in the field), the necessity of establishing English as the sole official language, the Native question (of vital importance), the question of Asiatic immigration (of hardly less). Here I have merely indicated what seemed to me three of the most salient features in the present problem, and the measures in regard to these, which ought to be taken without delay if we keep steadily in view the object which ought to dominate the mind of every loyal citizen of the Empire who contributes to the public discussion of this one engrossing topic of the hour.

No one conclusion has been more clearly borne to my mind, after many years' consideration of the problem,

than that upon the retention of the Imperial hold on South Africa depends the existence of the Empire itself. Such is the universal conviction of all Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders with whom I have discussed the question; and such is the settled belief of all those great States who have sealed their conviction with their blood in this war. Any weakening of our hold, any wavering in our determination, must inevitably be the beginning of a centrifugal movement which will dissolve the Empire into its component parts. The secession of Canada to the United States, the independence of Federated Australia and New Zealand, must inevitably follow the conviction, which would be borne in on the minds of the people of those States, that the ruling class of the United Kingdom had become unworthy of the high task committed to them by Providence. I do not propose to dwell here upon the loss to all the races of men, which would be the result of such a calamity as the dissolution of that Empire which has hitherto borne so great a part in the task of all the European race, of spreading justice and humanity over the face of the earth. But I refrain because I am convinced that our people will rise equal to the emergency, and will hand down undimmed and unimpaired our heritage of the past,—the sword and shield of justice, which are the symbol of our rule.

M. J. FARRELLY.